



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

WEDNESDAY — 2 MAR 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	03/02 WHO: Covid cases, deaths fall
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/covid-cases-deaths-continue-to-fall-globally-who-reports/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/covid-cases-deaths-continue-to-fall-globally-who-reports/</a>
GIST	<p>GENEVA (AP) — The number of new coronavirus cases reported globally dropped by 16% last week, marking a month-long decline in COVID-19 infections, according to figures from the World Health Organization.</p> <p>In its weekly report on the pandemic issued late Tuesday, the U.N. health agency also said that deaths fell by 10%, continuing a drop in fatalities first seen last week. WHO said there were more than 10 million new cases and about 60,000 deaths globally. The Western Pacific was the only region where COVID-19 increased, with about a third more infections than the previous week. Deaths rose by 22% in the Western Pacific and about 4% in the Middle East, while declining everywhere else.</p> <p>WHO said the omicron variant remains overwhelmingly dominant worldwide; among virus sequences shared with the world's largest publicly accessible database, more than 99.5% were omicron while only 0.3% were delta. In the last month, none of the other worrying variants — including beta, gamma, lambda or mu — have been reported, although WHO said there were surveillance challenges in many countries.</p> <p>Numerous countries across Europe including Britain, Sweden and Denmark, have released nearly all their COVID-19 restrictions as cases have fallen dramatically while immunization campaigns have progressed. In the U.S., scientists have estimated about 73% of the population is now immune to omicron and that any future spikes of disease will require far less disruptive interventions to control epidemics.</p> <p>Still, WHO has repeatedly said it is too early to declare the pandemic over and warned that if the coronavirus is allowed to continue spreading, it will have further chances to mutate into a potentially more deadly or transmissible version.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/02 Private employers hiring increases sharply
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/employment-jobs-data-adp-moodys/2022/03/02/id/1059234/">https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/employment-jobs-data-adp-moodys/2022/03/02/id/1059234/</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. private employers hired more workers than expected in February and data for the prior month was revised sharply higher as the labor market recovery gathers steam.</p> <p>Private payrolls increased by 475,000 jobs last month, the ADP National Employment Report showed on Wednesday.</p> <p><b>January Number Revised Up to 509k</b></p> <p>Data for January was revised higher to show 509,000 jobs were added instead of 301,000 lost as initially reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast private payrolls would increase by 388,000 jobs.</p> <p>The ADP report is jointly developed with Moody's Analytics and was published ahead of the Labor Department's more comprehensive and closely watched employment report for February on Friday. It has, however, a poor record predicting the private payrolls count in the department's Bureau of Labor Statistics employment report because of methodology differences.</p> <p>While the initial ADP estimate showed private payrolls fell for the first time in a year in January, the BLS reported that the private sector hired 444,000 workers, with large upward revisions to employment gains in November and December.</p> <p>Indications are that companies maintained a strong pace of hiring in February. Data from Homebase, a payroll scheduling and tracking company, showed substantial increases in the number of employees on the</p>

job as well as hours worked in mid-February.

### **Omicron Impact Over**

According to UKG's workforce activity report, workforce activity saw its largest monthly increase in shift work in February since the spring of 2020. The workforce management software company said the surge meant that the impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 on hourly shift work was over.

That aligns with expectations for another month of solid employment gains in February. Nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 400,000 jobs after rising 467,000 in January, according to a Reuters survey of economists. Private payrolls are forecast to have increased by 378,000 jobs in February.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Belarus reveal Putin Moldova invasion?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10565523/Ukraine-war-Belarus-dictator-stands-battle-map-live-TV.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10565523/Ukraine-war-Belarus-dictator-stands-battle-map-live-TV.html</a>
GIST	<p>Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko appears to have indicated Vladimir Putin's forces have plans to invade Moldova.</p> <p>Putin's war-mongering sidekick addressed security officials today while standing in front of a battle map that seems to show a planned operation from southern Ukraine into its tiny neighbour.</p> <p>The map also showed proposed battle plans for Russian troops across the country.</p> <p>It detailed Russian lines of attack heading into Ukraine, some of which have materialised in the first few days of the invasion - such as forces storming towards Kyiv from the north, and towards Kherson from Crimea.</p> <p>But they also showed off several attacks that have yet to come to pass - with one even appearing to point from the port city of Odessa into Moldova, suggesting Russia plans to march troops into Ukraine's neighbour.</p> <p>Meanwhile Putin's military has suffered an embarrassing string of defeats while trying to carry out precision strikes on key targets in an apparent effort to win the war quickly and convincingly.</p> <p>That has raised fears that he is now about to deploy Russian heavy armour and artillery in an attempt to brute-force his way to victory - a strategy that could cause huge civilian casualties.</p> <p>A 'terrifying' convoy 40 miles long comprised of tanks and artillery is now heading towards the capital Kyiv, apparently in an effort to surround it.</p> <p>Russian forces began bombarding the city today, striking a TV mast and a nearby Holocaust memorial, after warning citizens to leave or risk being killed.</p> <p>Several of the city's neighbourhoods are currently under attack, according to local reports. The Kyiv Independent reported at 23:29 local time (21:29GMT) that Russian bombs have struck Vyshneve, a town outside the capital.</p> <p>It also said the neighbourhoods of Rusanivka, Kurenivka and Boiarka - as well as the area near Kyiv International Airport - were coming under fire. Rusanivka in particular is very central.</p> <p>It also reported a loud explosion was heard at Bila Tserkva, a city in Kyiv Oblast, when a fuel depot was attacked, according to the UNIAN news agency.</p> <p>The locations of the reported attacks suggest Russian forces are tonight closing in from multiple sides of the capital, particularly from the west.</p>

The map displayed by Lukashenko is split into four sections which align with the command districts of Ukraine's military, showing Russian attacks from Belarus, along Ukraine's eastern border, and from occupied Crimea.

A two-pronged pincer movement is shown targeting Kyiv - an attack that is currently playing out - which forces are also shown heading out of occupied Donetsk and Crimea before linking up at Melitopol, which Russia has captured.

But attacks are also shown hitting the city of Dnipro, which has yet to take place - possibly because the forces assigned to attack it have been held up by fierce resistance in Kharkiv, which is along the route.

Another attack appears to be heading for the city of Cherkasy via the city of Sumy, where Russian forces have also been held up, while a third appears to break off from the Kyiv assault towards Zhytomyr.

Perhaps the most baffling shows troops attacking from the Ukrainian port city of Odessa towards Transnistria, a breakaway region of Moldova that Russia occupies.

Nicu Popescu, Moldova's deputy prime minister, admitted today that his country is in a 'very risky zone' with the population feeling 'anxiety and fear'. But, he added, he does not expect to be invaded and instead sees the biggest challenge as handling an influx of refugees.

A Ukrainian military official said Belarusian troops joined the war Tuesday in the Chernihiv region in the north, without providing details. But just before that, Lukashenko said his country had no plans to join the fight.

The map also pinpoints what appear to be Ukrainian military infrastructure and missile batteries in locations that were struck by Russian missile strikes on the first day of the invasion.

In a clip of the meeting posted online, Lukashenko can also be heard talking about missile strikes launched from Belarusian territory at Ukraine in advance of the main Russian assault.

'Missiles in the Mazyr region hit those [Ukrainian] positions, after which we didn't see them again,' Lukashenko tells his top cabinet.

'Once the Russians began their advance, we no longer saw those positions.

'That's why I say that, yes, there were indeed missile launches from Belarusian territory and have shared honestly which targets we attacked.'

Perhaps worryingly for the direction the war could take from here, the chart also features a map of the US mainland and Canada.

A box on the right-hand side detailing what appear to be military units also features the badge of the US Army Air Cavalry, while below it there is a map of the whole of Europe - perhaps detailing NATO troop positions.

Russia is now six days into its invasion of Ukraine, and the battle does not appear to be going to plan.

Ukraine's military has put up a stronger-than-expected resistance while ordinary civilians have also come out in force to resist 'the occupiers'.

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HEADLINE	03/02 Russia economy taking 'serious blows'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/02/business/russia-markets-economy-sberbank/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/02/business/russia-markets-economy-sberbank/index.html</a>

**London/Moscow (CNN Business)** The Russian economy is taking "serious blows," the Kremlin acknowledged Wednesday, as the country's growing [isolation](#) piles further pressure on its [tottering financial system](#).

Apple ([AAPL](#)), ExxonMobil ([XOM](#)), Ford ([F](#)), Boeing ([BA](#)) and Airbus ([EADSF](#)) joined a [list of companies](#) shutting down or suspending their operations in Russia in response to its [invasion of Ukraine](#) and ensuing Western sanctions, and the European arm of Russia's biggest bank collapsed following a run on its deposits. [The ruble weakened again](#) to trade at 112 to the US dollar.

"Russia's economy is experiencing serious blows," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a call with foreign journalists. "But there is a certain margin of safety, there is potential, there are some plans, work is underway."

Peskov was responding to a question about US President Joe Biden's remark in his [State of the Union speech](#) that the Russian economy had been left "reeling" from sanctions.

Sberbank ([SBRBY](#)), Russia's biggest lender, said Wednesday it was quitting Europe, with the exception of [Switzerland](#), after banking regulators in Austria forced the closure of its Vienna-based EU subsidiary. The European Central Bank had warned earlier this week that Sberbank Europe was likely to fail after depositors rushed to withdraw their money following the imposition of Western sanctions on much of Russia's financial system.

Sberbank said its subsidiaries had faced "an exceptional outflow of funds and a number of safety concerns regarding its employees and offices," the group said in a statement, adding it had been prevented from bailing them out by an order from the Russian central bank.

The banking sanctions are part of a broader package of measures the West has taken, unprecedented in scale against an economy of Russia's importance, with the aim of cutting off funding for Russian President Vladimir Putin's war effort. France estimates that \$1 trillion worth of Russian assets have been frozen, including about half of the Russian government's war chest of reserves.

Moscow has responded with a series of emergency measures aimed at preventing financial meltdown, halting the flow of cash out of the country and preserving its foreign currency reserves. The central bank more than doubled interest rates to 20%, and banned Russian brokers from selling securities held by foreigners.

### **More capital controls**

The Russian stock market was shuttered Monday and hasn't reopened since. The central bank said it would remain closed Wednesday. The government has ordered exporters to exchange 80% of their foreign currency revenues for rubles, and banned Russian residents from making bank transfers outside the country.

On Tuesday, the government said Putin was working on a decree that would prevent foreign companies exiting their Russian assets — a bid to prevent an exodus that has gathered pace this week. Putin also signed a decree banning people from taking more than \$10,000 or equivalent in foreign currency from the country, state news agencies TASS and RIA reported.

The central bank went further on Wednesday in its attempt to staunch the flow of money out of the country. It suspended transfers abroad from accounts held by non-resident corporate entities and individuals from a number of countries. The restriction does not apply to Russian citizens.

"Conditions in the Russian financial system and wider economy are likely to deteriorate further in the days and weeks ahead as the already announced sanctions take their toll and future sanctions add to the sustained negative shock," wrote Berenberg senior economist Kallum Pickering in a research note Wednesday.

	"For the foreseeable future, Russia will remain isolated from the western world and major global markets."
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Hong Kong record Covid cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/health/hong-kong-record-covid-19-cases-movements-restricted">https://www.foxnews.com/health/hong-kong-record-covid-19-cases-movements-restricted</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Hong Kong's</a> leader on Wednesday said people's movements may be restricted during mandatory testing this month of the entire population for the <a href="#">coronavirus</a>, as <a href="#">health</a> officials reported a record 55,353 daily <a href="#">infections</a> and over a hundred deaths.</p> <p>Chief executive Carrie Lam said authorities are still refining the plan, but that there would be no "complete" lockdown that would prevent entry and exit from the city.</p> <p>"The extent of it must take into account Hong Kong's circumstances and people's needs," she <a href="#">told</a> reporters.</p> <p>Hong Kong is planning to test its more than 7 million residents as it grapples with soaring numbers of COVID-19 cases in its worst outbreak of the pandemic, linked largely to the omicron variant.</p> <p>Officials on Wednesday reported 117 deaths, taking the total number above 1,000. About 80% of the deaths have occurred since late December. Most involved elderly patients who were not fully <a href="#">vaccinated</a>.</p> <p>"We recorded about 55,000 infections today, which is within our expectation. Recently every two or three days the number of confirmed cases is doubling," said Albert Au, a health officer with the Centre for Health Protection. He said cases have not yet peaked.</p> <p>U.S. <a href="#">authorities</a> on Wednesday warned Americans against <a href="#">traveling</a> to Hong Kong, with the <a href="#">State Department</a> raising its travel advisory to Level 4 — Do Not Travel — because of rising cases and restrictions imposed by the city and mainland <a href="#">China</a> under their "zero-tolerance" policy toward the coronavirus.</p> <p>"We especially want to note for families considering traveling to or residing in Hong Kong that in some cases, children in Hong Kong who test positive have been separated from their parents and kept in isolation until they meet local hospital discharge requirements," the travel advisory said.</p> <p>The surge is threatening to overwhelm Hong Kong's hospitals, with officials saying they have reached maximum bed capacity and some general wards are being converted into isolation areas.</p> <p>Public mortuaries have also reached full capacity, and help is being sought from the private sector to store bodies, officials say. The Hospital Authority has also ordered refrigerated containers to temporarily store bodies, health officials said.</p> <p>Supermarket shelves were wiped bare this week as residents stockpiled daily necessities after reports spread of a possible citywide lockdown. Authorities have called for calm and reassured people that <a href="#">food</a> supplies are normal.</p> <p>In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin backed Hong Kong's virus control measures.</p> <p>Wang said the measures "are necessary, <a href="#">science</a>-based and responsible to effectively prevent and control the epidemic and ensure the health of Hong Kong residents and foreigners in Hong Kong."</p> <p>"We believe that the relevant measures will further build up the international community's confidence in Hong Kong's epidemic control, ensure Hong Kong's safe and orderly interaction with the international community, and provide a more secure and stable business environment for international investors in Hong Kong," Wang said at a daily briefing Wednesday.</p>



HEADLINE	03/01 Ukraine official: assassination plot foiled
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.axios.com/zelensky-assassination-plot-foiled-7bea049b-2308-4801-b75a-93104c17b82b.html">https://www.axios.com/zelensky-assassination-plot-foiled-7bea049b-2308-4801-b75a-93104c17b82b.html</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council chief Oleksiy Danilov announced during a briefing Tuesday that Ukrainian forces had foiled an assassination plot against President <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelensky</a>, according to a <a href="#">Telegram post from Ukrainian authorities</a>.</p> <p><b>Why it matters:</b> Zelensky has said since the start of <a href="#">Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine</a> that he would be a prime target for assassination. Last Thursday, he warned that Russian "sabotage groups" had entered Kyiv and were <a href="#">hunting for him and his family</a>.</p> <p><b>The big picture:</b> According to the Telegram message, Danilov said that a unit of elite Chechen special forces, known as Kadyrovites, had been behind the plot and had subsequently been "eliminated."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "We are well aware of the special operation that was to take place directly by the Kadyrovites to eliminate our president," Danilov said, per the post.</li><li>• Ukrainian authorities had been tipped off about the plot by members of Russia's Federal Security Service who do not support the war, he added.</li><li>• Danilov elaborated that the Kadyrovite group had been divided into two, with one being destroyed in Gostomel and the other "under fire."</li></ul>
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HEADLINE	03/01 California drought grows dire again
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/california-drought-grows-dire-again-after-two-record-dry-months-11646170295?mod=hp_featst_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/california-drought-grows-dire-again-after-two-record-dry-months-11646170295?mod=hp_featst_pos4</a>
GIST	<p>California's snowpack has shrunk to about two-thirds of normal, as the state's relentless drought produced the driest January and February on record and raised the likelihood of more wildfires and deeper water cuts to cities and farms.</p> <p>A manual survey conducted Tuesday by the state Department of Water Resources showed a snowfield near Lake Tahoe was at 68% of normal. Electronic readings of snow across the Sierra Nevada range, which supplies much of California's water when it melts, stood at 63% of normal for March 1. With forecasts showing no major storms on the horizon, state officials expressed little hope that March would make up for the deficit by the time the California wet season ends in April.</p> <p>"It's safe to say we will end this [water] year dry," Sean de Guzman, manager of the agency's snow surveys, said at a briefing after taking the manual measurement Tuesday.</p> <p>The dry spell comes after California experienced one of its wettest Decembers on record and snow piled up more than 15 feet in the Sierra Nevada. But the statewide snowpack that measured 154% of normal on Jan. 1 steadily shriveled, as a high pressure ridge moved into place along the coast and deflected storms.</p> <p>Downtown San Francisco recorded 0.65 inches of rain in January and February, compared with a normal of 8.77 inches, said National Weather Service meteorologist Drew Peterson.</p> <p>State officials blame climate change for the increased frequency and severity of drought, which is also plaguing many other parts of the American West. "We are seeing these extremes we have never seen before, and honestly models never would have predicted before," said David Rizzardo, hydrology section manager for the state water agency.</p> <p>Now, California will have to once again brace for two of the major consequences of drought: heightened wildfire danger and diminished water supplies. After 2.6 million acres burned last year and a record 4.3 million in 2020, state officials say this year could be just as bad because new grass and brush started growing during December and quickly turned dry—a flammable combination.</p>

	<p>Temperatures have been above normal, too, with San Francisco recording daytime highs of 2.2 degrees higher than normal in January and 3.5 higher in February, according to the National Weather Service. Besides raising the fire danger, Mr. Rizzardo said the warmer temperatures are melting snow before it can run off into the state's reservoirs as happened last spring.</p> <p>With major reservoirs such as Shasta Lake at 37% of capacity and Lake Oroville at 47%, state and federal officials have instituted cutbacks to users. The federal Bureau of Reclamation on Feb. 23 announced an initial allocation of 0% to many farmers in the state's Central Valley. Farmers now are preparing belt-tightening plans, which are expected to include far fewer crops planted and workers employed.</p> <p>Some cities and suburbs could be affected, too. Already the major water agency in Marin County, north of San Francisco, has instituted water restrictions. Other agencies around the state have ramped up their use of reclaimed water and other conservation techniques to prepare for continued drought.</p> <p>"We are dealing with unprecedented circumstances," Jeff Sutton, general manager of the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, said at a meeting of Colusa County water users on Feb. 17. "We continue to be optimistic, but it gets harder and harder as each day passes."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 War in Ukraine disrupts ships around globe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/war-in-ukraine-disrupts-ships-around-the-globe-11646138737?mod=hp_list_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/war-in-ukraine-disrupts-ships-around-the-globe-11646138737?mod=hp_list_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>The world's biggest container ship operators—A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S and Mediterranean Shipping Co.—said they would temporarily suspend services to Russian ports, including those far from <a href="#">the conflict in Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>Maersk said Tuesday it was halting bookings in light of the <a href="#">sanctions imposed on Russia</a>, including congestion being caused by customs authorities inspecting cargo bound for the country and changing credit terms impacting its customers. Maersk and MSC said they would continue to move foodstuffs to and from Russia.</p> <p>The Russian invasion of Ukraine is causing major <a href="#">disruptions for the global shipping industry</a>, with hundreds of vessels trapped at ports, cargo being derailed and freight rates surging.</p> <p>The cargo ship Mustafa Necati was ready last week to set sail from a port near Odessa, Ukraine, with sunflower seed oil bound for Sardinia. After <a href="#">Russia invaded</a>, "the Ukrainian port authorities told the crew to stop," said Bulent Dandin, a director of the ship's Istanbul manager Statu Gemi Kiralama. "Now it's blocked."</p> <p>The impact is most severe in the Black Sea where some commercial ships <a href="#">are being fired upon</a> or detained, but it is also <a href="#">being felt far from the conflict zone</a>, according to shipping executives and brokers. The disruptions <a href="#">are adding strains to a global supply chain</a> already stressed from two years of pandemic imbalances.</p> <p>On Monday, the U.K. banned entry to all Russian vessels to its ports. Shipping executives and port officials in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany said containerized cargo destined for Russia would be stopped and inspected.</p> <p>"All those hubs in Northern Europe are already pretty congested, and every little thing that delays cargo flows will intensify the problem," said Vincent Clerc, head of ocean and logistics services at Maersk.</p> <p>Ship movements in the Black Sea, a key oil and foodstuff export route whose northern side is shared between Russia and Ukraine, have been frozen. More than 200 vessels are waiting to cross the Kerch</p>



Strait, which connects the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, according to Lloyd's List Intelligence, which monitors ship movements.

"No one saw this coming," said Slava Sorochan, a deputy director at Stark Shipping LLC, a shipping agent in the Ukrainian port of Odessa. "That's why so many vessels are stuck in ports."

On Friday, the Millennial Spirit, a Moldova-flagged tanker, [caught fire after a missile strike](#) in the Black Sea, the Naval Agency of the Republic of Moldova said. Moldova said it didn't know who fired the missile. The Millennial Spirit was carrying 600 tons of oil and diesel. A day earlier a ship chartered by Cargill Inc. was hit by a projectile in the Black Sea.

With few daring to travel the area, daily freight rates for tankers [have risen to their highest in two years](#), shippers and insurers say, while insurance premiums have jumped by as much as 4% compared with last week, before the Russian attack, they say.

Although the sanctions so far haven't targeted Russian exports of oil and gas, the U.S. last week [banned American companies from dealing](#) with the long-term debt or buying new shares of 13 Russian entities including state-controlled [Sovcomflot](#), which operates a fleet of 108 crude carriers and 14 natural-gas movers.

"Tanker owners are facing a very uncertain situation and are reluctant to charter ships to buyers of Russian crude," said Peter Sand, chief analyst at Xeneta, a transport analytics market platform. "Very few ships are picking up Russian crude, and that has significantly pushed up freight rates."

Daily rates for smaller-size Aframax tankers, which are key for regional oil trading in the Black Sea, Baltic Sea and Mediterranean, jumped to an average \$68,000 last week from \$11,000 the week before. Daily rates for medium-size Suezmaxes surged to \$41,000 from around \$4,000. The rates are the highest since the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus, which includes Russia, cut oil production in June 2020.

Shipments of foodstuff are also being disrupted. Within hours of U.K. measures against Russia being announced, London lawyer Nigel Kushner said he received a panicked call from a British trader: A massive cargo of Russian foodstuff was now stranded as the buyer couldn't pay to a now-sanctioned Russian bank. The London trader is now "trying an alternative payment route to a different Russian bank," he said.

The number of dry-bulk carriers in the normally crowded Black Sea has fallen by 62% compared with last week amid rising concerns about safety or getting stuck, said Mark Nugent, from London broker Braemar ACM Shipbroking. And 22 of these vessels left empty after being unable to load cargo, he said.

Ships are getting rerouted by governments. France seized the Baltic Leader, a Russia-bound cargo ship in the English Channel over the weekend, with authorities checking whether it is owned by a Russian on the EU sanctions list.

Two Ukrainian-flagged bulk carriers, the Afina and Princess Nicole, which were sailing in Romanian waters, were captured Sunday by the Russian Navy and brought to Crimea, according to the Ukrainian government.

Shippers may be facing further disruptions. The European Union is considering blocking Russian ships from calling at its ports, according to people familiar with the matter. The U.K. took such a step on Monday.

"Russia's assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state," Transport Secretary Grant Shapps wrote in a letter to U.K. ports. "In these circumstances, the Department of Transportation does not consider it appropriate for Russian vessels to continue to enter U.K. ports."

HEADLINE	03/02 Ukraine Kharkiv front line holds
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-resumes-kharkiv-bombardment-in-bid-to-break-ukrainian-resistance-11646208607">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-resumes-kharkiv-bombardment-in-bid-to-break-ukrainian-resistance-11646208607</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Russian forces pounded Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-largest city, with airstrikes in a bid to break the will of Ukraine’s resistance on the seventh day of <a href="#">the war unleashed</a> by President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>.</p> <p>Kharkiv residents said the city suffered heavy bombardment overnight and into the morning, including airstrikes that hit residential areas and civilian infrastructure. Kharkiv’s police headquarters and the nearby university building were severely damaged and caught fire. Authorities reported 21 dead and 112 injured in the past 24 hours.</p> <p>Russian forces also attempted to seize the city’s military hospital, local authorities said. However, the front line held and the city of 1.4 million people remained under Ukrainian control, they said.</p> <p>The assault on civilian areas shows how Moscow has switched to a strategy of indiscriminate aerial assaults. Moscow focus at the start of the war on military and strategic targets has fallen away as it tries to <a href="#">demoralize Ukraine’s population</a>.</p> <p>Kharkiv, whose population is mostly Russian-speaking, appeared to bear the brunt of bombardments that continued across Ukrainian cities Wednesday. The northeastern city has mounted stiff resistance to Russia’s invasion, despite Mr. Putin having cited alleged discrimination against Ukraine’s Russian speakers as one of his reasons for the military campaign.</p> <p>“The enemy is afraid of direct contact with Ukrainian defenders. That’s why it switched to the tactic of firing at peaceful Ukrainian cities from afar,” Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said Wednesday.</p> <p>Mr. Putin launched Russia’s invasion of Ukraine with the goal of overthrowing the country’s elected government and ending its alignment with the West. Russian forces, however, have struggled with fierce Ukrainian resistance and logistical problems, making slower progress than most military analysts had expected. Russian forces have encountered a range of obstacles since entering Ukraine, including food and fuel shortages, according to a senior U.S. defense official.</p> <p>A miles-long column of Russian forces heading toward Kyiv from the northwest has been largely stationary since Ukrainian forces hit the convoy two days ago near the town of Bucha. Mr. Reznikov said that in recent days Ukraine had received and deployed a new batch of Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 armed drones, using them to target Russian columns from the air.</p> <p>Ukraine was receiving critical supplies for its defense from Europe, Mr. Reznikov said, adding, “We have become the front line of the free world.”</p> <p>Russia has gained a swath of land in southern Ukraine in addition to its push in the northeast and northwest.</p> <p>An airstrike hit Kyiv’s iconic television tower on Tuesday, killing five civilians and injuring five others, Ukraine’s state emergency service said. The strike also temporarily disabled the broadcasting ability of Ukraine’s central TV channels, Ukraine’s communications authority said. The authority said it would switch on reserve broadcast facilities.</p> <p>The TV tower was hit after Russia’s Defense Ministry said it would target Ukrainian intelligence and communications facilities in central Kyiv that it said were being used for “information attacks” against Russia. Moscow urged residents living nearby to leave for their own safety. Western diplomats took the warning as a signal that a massive strike on Kyiv’s residential areas was imminent. Some of the remaining staff at foreign embassies left Ukraine’s capital.</p>

The TV tower, erected in 1973, stands in the Babyn Yar area, where much of Kyiv's Jewish population was massacred by the Nazis during World War II.

Mr. Putin has said his goal is to "de-Nazify" Ukraine, falsely claiming that President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is Jewish, is beholden to U.S.-guided neo-Nazis.

"Putin seeking to distort and manipulate the Holocaust to justify an illegal invasion of a sovereign democratic country is utterly abhorrent," said Nathan Sharansky, the chairman of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center and a former Israeli deputy prime minister who was born in Donetsk, Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said a Russian delegation was ready to continue cease-fire talks with Ukraine on Wednesday. The first round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations met in Belarus on Monday but produced no immediate results. Two sides initially agreed to meet again in the coming days on the Ukrainian-Polish border. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said Kyiv is prepared to participate but doesn't know when.

In Kharkiv, residents say the city is running low on food. Shops are barely functioning. Some districts reported water, heating and electricity outages.

"I have the impression that Russia wants to wipe the city off the face of the earth," said Oleksandr Skoryk, who owns a meat company based in a district in Kharkiv's east.

The defense of the city is led by the Ukrainian army, along with several volunteer militias including nationalist groups and one made up of soccer fans.

"There are fights in the city. Russian warplanes are constantly bombing residential districts," said Heorhiy Tarasenko, a Kharkiv resident and volunteer fighter. "Russia is taking big losses and doesn't want to fight with the army but with civilians."

A video from a strike that hit a residential district Tuesday showed two dead civilians, including one with his face mangled and pinned down by a tree branch. Several people wandered dazed amid rubble and burning buildings.

Mr. Skoryk said his district was hit by a rocket attack Tuesday that destroyed a supermarket. His company isn't working, but he is emptying his warehouses of meat, handing it out on the streets and trying to deliver to hospitals and orphanages.

"The whole city has come together as one to help each other," said the 46-year-old. "Soldiers are defending us. We'll fight to the end. No one will take Kharkiv."

President Biden spoke with Mr. Zelensky for more than 30 minutes on Tuesday, the White House said. The two leaders discussed U.S. and allied assistance for Ukraine and Russia's escalation of attacks on sites used by civilians, including the strike near Babyn Yar, the White House said.

"He thought he could roll into Ukraine and the world would roll over," Mr. Biden said in his State of the Union address. "Instead he met with a wall of strength he never imagined. He met the Ukrainian people."

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HEADLINE	03/01 Iran nuclear talks down to the wire
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/01/iran-nuclear-deal-talks/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/01/iran-nuclear-deal-talks/</a>
GIST	VIENNA — Russia's invasion of Ukraine has cast a shadow over talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal, which extended beyond a presumed deadline Tuesday amid growing doubts that a new agreement is in sight.

Iran's chief negotiator returned to Vienna from a visit to Tehran over the weekend with hardened demands, diplomats say, dampening hopes that an agreement to bring the United States back into the deal and Iran back into compliance would be wrapped up by the end of February. European negotiators had warned that they were prepared to walk away if there was still no agreement by Monday.

On Monday the United States joined the warning, with State Department spokesman Ned Price telling reporters in Washington that the Biden administration also is "prepared to walk away if Iran displays an intransigence to making progress."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh countered Tuesday with a warning that Iran could pull out, too.

"Iran is willing but will not wait forever," he said on his Twitter feed, adding, "A deal is at hand if WH [White House] makes its mind."

"A no deal outcome is as possible as reaching a potential deal because some minimum demands of Iran remain unmet," cautioned the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

The threats may just be part of the inevitable last-minute brinkmanship that typically accompanies the final hours of negotiations, analysts say. "The negotiations will probably get more turbulent in the coming days, exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, underscoring that the prospect of failure is real," Henry Rome wrote in a note for the Eurasia Group.

But the stakes, always high, have been raised higher by the Ukraine war, which has rocked the stability of Europe, sent oil prices soaring and raised the specter of nuclear conflict for the first time in over 30 years.

Failure in Vienna would further destabilize the world, risking a new nuclear arms race in the Middle East and perhaps yet another war, analysts say.

"It could be a 1914 moment," said Ali Vaez of the International Crisis Group.

The concern is, he said, that Iran has been emboldened by the collapse of relations between the United States and Russia and the soaring price of oil to press for new concessions, on the assumption that high oil prices will make Washington more desperate for a deal. Russia is one of the seven original parties to the deal, along with the United States, Britain, France, Germany, China and Iran.

The Ukraine war has pushed the price of oil above \$100, causing pain for consumers in the United States and around the world and putting pressure on politicians. The return to world markets of Iranian oil could bring prices down by as much as 10 percent, Vaez said.

After acting on many previous occasions to rescue the talks from collapse, Russia could also potentially become a spoiler now that its relationship with the West has ruptured, said Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Reviving the deal nonetheless continues to make sense for all the parties concerned, including Russia, he said. Russian Ambassador Mikhail Ulyanov has repeatedly told reporters that the war has had no impact on the talks. He called it "regrettable but not dramatic" that the talks had not wrapped up by Monday.

"It was a timeline not a deadline," he wrote on his Twitter account.

Negotiators have spent the past 10 months trying to hammer out an agreement on the terms under which the United States will return to the nuclear deal negotiated by President Barack Obama, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and bring Iran back into compliance. President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the agreement and impose tough sanctions on Tehran prompted Iran to renege on its promises to refrain from enriching uranium.

	<p>Iran's nuclear program has now reached the point where it is only weeks away from achieving breakout, which would mean it has enough enriched uranium to produce a nuclear bomb, diplomats and experts say.</p> <p>"It's a really bizarre situation. We were finally at a point a couple of weeks ago where all the parties really believed a deal was at hand. And now the international environment has shifted," said Batmanghelidj, who nonetheless added he believed a deal was more likely than not.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Russia inspiration now warning for China</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5qm4y/china-taiwan-ukraine-invasion-russia-putin-xi-jinping">https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5qm4y/china-taiwan-ukraine-invasion-russia-putin-xi-jinping</a>
GIST	<p>It's impossible to know what China's President Xi Jinping was thinking when his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin <a href="#">attacked Ukraine</a> on Thursday morning. But at that point it was easy to speculate.</p> <p>After all, this was a move that in many ways echoed China's own territorial ambitions in Taiwan, a self-rule democracy that Beijing has claimed as its territory. Both Russia and China had previously threatened to violate international norms and <a href="#">muscle in on their weaker neighbours</a>. Now one of them had finally done it.</p> <p>Hours before the invasion, John Blaxland, a professor of international security and intelligence studies at the Australian National University, told VICE World News that countries like China were most likely viewing Putin's Ukrainian power grab as a sort of canary down the geopolitical coal mine. If the U.S. and NATO failed to prevent Russia from expanding its territory into the Ukrainian heartland, Blaxland suggested, that would send "a very strong signal to Beijing that the West lacks the resolve to push back against additional Chinese assertiveness in relation to Taiwan."</p> <p>At that point, the swift and decisive fall of Ukraine had seemed like a foregone conclusion, as 190,000 Russian troops amassed in and around the country. But the developments of the past week have come as a surprise to almost everyone.</p> <p>Russia's advance into Ukraine has been stalled, stymied and in many cases <a href="#">deflected by local armed forces</a>, with multiple Western military observers telling VICE News they were shocked at <a href="#">how bad Russia's military is doing</a>. The conflict is dragging out longer than many had expected, while a battery of economic and diplomatic sanctions from the West has <a href="#">threatened to cripple Russia on the homefront</a> and <a href="#">stir civil unrest</a>.</p> <p>The Russian canary isn't quite as chirpy as it was six days ago—and those paying close attention are more likely to be heeding its message as a warning than a rallying cry, experts say.</p> <p>"China would have liked this to have gone very, very well for Russia, and had it happened quickly and relatively uneventfully, they would have gained something from it," Blaxland told VICE World News on Tuesday. "But the untidy, very ugly scenes emerging from Ukraine are having the opposite effect, and the crystallising of resolve internationally is really running against China's interests in terms of its ability to divide and conquer and pursue its interests in the East China Sea, the South China Sea and Taiwan."</p> <p>The Russian invasion of Ukraine is almost definitely serving as a trial run for what happens when a country brazenly defies Western pressure in pursuing its own interests. But while before, Xi might have looked at Putin as a sort of inspiration, the Russian leader is now proving to be more of a crash dummy. According to Wen-Ti Sung, an academic fellow at the Australian Centre on China in the World, that's likely to give China pause when it comes to its own geopolitical strategies.</p> <p>"I think Beijing is likely shocked or at least surprised by the degree of difficulty that Russia has encountered... and the degree of principally Western but, broadly speaking, international unity," Sung told VICE World News from Taiwan, where he is currently doing fieldwork. "The amount of trouble Russia is having in Ukraine shows that it's very difficult even for a nuclear-armed great power to execute a blitzkrieg and do it successfully without much international pushback and sanctions. That will make China think twice [about Taiwan]."</p>

One previous hypothesis, Sung explained, was that Russia's invasion of Ukraine might embolden countries like China by being both a demonstration and a distraction. This time last week, there were fears not only that Putin's aggression could prove the tenability of such a move in the face of Western resistance, but also that a war in Eastern Europe may draw U.S. attention away from the Indo-Pacific and dilute the amount of resources dedicated to countering Beijing's threats and assertive behaviour.

Based on how the West responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the last few days, he now believes the opposite may be happening.

The U.S.' refusal to militarily intervene in the Ukraine crisis and instead provide support by way of sanctions and aid not only proves that they can effectively undermine enemy forces without having boots on the ground, it also indicates that they are no longer interested in sinking all their resources into European theatres of war. Continental nations like Germany and France are rising to the occasion—and that's allowing the U.S. to pay more attention to other areas of interest, like East Asia.

"The Ukraine episode also reinvigorated Western cohesion, and we see that through all these very complicated but ultimately successful, coordinated international sanctions against Russia," Sung added. "In that sense, there's another trial run at work here, and that is that the West has successfully tried and implemented well-coordinated sanctions against major violators of international norms... China will [now] be thinking that if it ever decided to launch a military attack, then the West may not simply be easily divided and conquered—and that indeed it's possible that the West has practice now on how to orchestrate a coordinated sanction campaign."

"The main takeaway is that the liberal international order has proven itself to be more resilient than many have given it credit for."

It is, of course, still the early days. There's no way of knowing how long the Ukrainians can stave off the Russian onslaught, and there's every chance that Putin will succeed in winning the war. Many commentators believe that the military offensives deployed thus far are a mere fraction of Russia's full military might, while others have flagged the likelihood that Putin will readily deploy any means necessary—potentially even nuclear weapons—if it means getting what he wants.

When it comes to China, though, the crucial point has, to some extent, already been proven: that flying in the face of international entreaties and subjugating an autonomous nation is not as easy as it might have seemed.

As Sung put it, "Even if Ukraine were to fall in weeks to come, at least Ukraine would have shown that blitzkrieg is not a realistic scenario... Even if Ukraine proves that eventually it will fall and the invasion eventually could be successful, it doesn't automatically lead us to think that Taiwan will fall anywhere near as easily."

Far from fuelling the flames of war in East Asia, then, Putin's embattled invasion of Ukraine may have thrown water on China's ambitions—or at least given Beijing a good reason to exert patience. Whether or not it prompts them to wind back some of their increasingly assertive territorial claims in the region, however, remains to be seen. Not least of all for Xi Jinping himself.

"It's too early to say, because this battle is only days old and may yet go more in Russia's favour," said Blaxland. "But China will be very circumspect for now to see whether this newfound Western resolve holds, [or] whether it is broken in the face of Russians upping the ante with the nuclear threat."

"China will no doubt be keeping its powder dry with a view to learn the lessons from this as the dust settles. The dust is still being made—it's not at all settled yet—but they will nonetheless be acutely paying attention to the ramifications in the capitals around the world."



HEADLINE	03/02 Helping anxious mothers of Russia soldiers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/russian-soldiers-mothers-committee-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/russian-soldiers-mothers-committee-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>Svetlana Golub's phone had not stopped ringing since Thursday. At the other end of the line, tearful family members across Russia frantically tried to figure out the fate of their sons, brothers and husbands fighting in Russia's bloody war in Ukraine.</p> <p>"It is crazy," said Golub, pointing to her glowing phone. "We are getting hundreds and hundreds of calls. It's just a sea of tears."</p> <p>Golub is the head of the Soldiers' Mothers Committee, an NGO advocating for soldiers' rights that has become the main contact point for the worried relatives of Russian soldiers.</p> <p>"See, I told you," Golub shrugged, picking up another call during a conversation in her office in a residential area in north-east Moscow.</p> <p>"This just keeps going and going. Everyone is very busy, we constantly receive people, get requests. We represent the interests of families in court and bring their concerns to the authorities," Golub said.</p> <p>Families of those fighting the war have received practically no information about the involvement of their loved ones in the conflict. As the fighting enters its fifth day, more relatives of the tens of thousands of soldiers deployed are turning to groups like the one run by Golub.</p> <p>"The families are being completely left in the dark. They had no idea that a military special operation was about to happen," Golub said.</p> <p>In one of the calls received by the organization and heard by the Guardian, a tearful mother begged Golub to find her son who the mother said she hadn't heard of since the beginning of February.</p> <p>"I know the situation is really bad when the families tell me they can't reach the soldiers any more," Golub said.</p> <p>In peacetime, the group usually stands up for the rights of soldiers. But now its efforts are completely focused on the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Golub said her organisation uses its own database to locate soldiers, sending requests to officials as to their whereabouts and status.</p> <p>Throughout the morning, Golub received calls from relatives saying their loved ones were unwilling to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>In one, a mother from the southern region of Dagestan said her son, who was on the frontline, had told his officers that he didn't want to participate in the conflict. They told him he had no choice.</p> <p>"This really shouldn't be going on," Golub said.</p> <p>Despite predictions from western intelligence, Russian troops have so far failed to quickly take Kyiv, and questions are being raised about the troops' morale and preparedness.</p> <p>Rob Lee, a Russian military expert and former US marine, said the situation on the ground indicated many soldiers seem insufficiently prepared for the war.</p> <p>"It's becoming clear that Putin only told very senior officers about the invasion. Soldiers look to be completely unaware of what their mission is in Ukraine," Lee said.</p> <p>According to Lee, this unpreparedness could have a "massive impact" on the morale of the soldiers, as Russia is set to intensify its fighting while facing strong and wide Ukrainian resistance.</p>

“You need to psychologically train your soldiers to fight an insurgency war. Emotionally, it is very hard to fight against a country whose people don’t want you to be there. The Russian military has already committed some very basic mistakes from strategic to tactical levels.

“The morale problem is set to grow if we see fighting going into cities with all the deadly consequences that sort of warfare brings,” he added.

Apart from assisting families who were trying to locate their relatives, Soldiers’ Mothers Committee is also hoping to bring back the bodies of the soldiers who have already been killed.

Golub said they decided to take the matter into their own hands after realising the ministry of defence “were dragging their feet” over returning the bodies.

Russia has so far released little information about the damage Ukraine has inflicted on its troops.

On Sunday, Russia’s ministry of defence for the first time admitted that there were “dead and wounded soldiers among our comrade[s]”, but added that “the number of destroyed [Ukrainian] nationalists by far outweigh” the number of Russian casualties. Three Russian regions have announced that their soldiers have been killed in the conflict.

But Golub and independent military experts like Lee believe the country could be underplaying the real death toll.

“Wars always lead to deaths. From the many conversations I have been sent between soldiers and their families, I believe many Russians have already died,” Golub said.

Other information too points to the possibility that Russia could be facing heavy losses.

Ukrainian officials have been posting graphic photographs on Telegram, showing what were said to be the bodies of Russian troops killed in action. Ukraine claims more than 5,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in the first four days of fighting.

The Guardian has heard a telephone conversation between a Russian soldier and his wife, in which the soldier described “many” deaths among his group.

“Sunshine, I am safe fighting in Ukraine. Sunshine, please don’t cry ... Many of our soldiers have died ... Our group only has 12 soldiers left. I am so sorry I’ve got to go. Tell Mum I said hi. I’ve got to go,” the man says, as his wife can be heard weeping.

Golub just hoped the fighting would end soon.

“Conflicts always mean lots of suffering. Please, both sides have to stop,” she said, adding she wished she could “lock Putin and Zelenskiy in a room and not let them out until they found a solution”.

“I wouldn’t even give them water or bread to speed up the process,” Golub said.

Despite receiving hundreds of calls and messages since the start of the war, she still looked visibly shaken after yet another call with one especially distressed mother.

“You never get used to this suffering – it’s impossible.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3373398/mayor-harrell-ends-spd-hiring-bonuses-council-approves-retroactive-recruitment-dollars/">https://mynorthwest.com/3373398/mayor-harrell-ends-spd-hiring-bonuses-council-approves-retroactive-recruitment-dollars/</a>
GIST	<p>Division among the mayor's office, Seattle police, and the Seattle council climaxed Tuesday with the end of a months-long saga involving the payment of hiring bonuses to SPD and emergency dispatch.</p> <p>Last year, in the midst of fears that SPD's number of active officers were dropping to alarming rates, former Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan ordered in November that SPD could provide \$10,000 new hire bonuses and \$25,000 for lateral hires. The Seattle City Council voted to sunset that order with the new year, signaling their interest in approaching the recruitment strategy with the new mayoral administration.</p> <p>As of February, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell has stopped the program.</p> <p>"In early February the Harrell administration directed the departments to immediately cease offering the bonuses," wrote Councilmember Herbold in a public statement.</p> <p>Mayor Harrell was asked about hiring bonuses in a Tuesday appearance with KIRO Newsradio, emphasizing his interest in changing the culture around recruitment, and how Seattle's police officers fit into his vision for a "one Seattle."</p> <p>"Part of what I have to do is I have to change the narrative for the city," Mayor Harrell told Gee Scott and Ursula Reutin. "People will work for an employer that they like, and they respect, not one that would demoralize them. That is part of my job. And so when I talk to the officers, rank and file, command staff, I say, 'come join this team.' We love Seattle; we believe in one Seattle, a 'one Seattle' that is safe, vibrant, happy, thriving."</p> <p>An SPD spokesperson confirmed with MyNorthwest that the department stopped offering hiring bonuses in February.</p> <p>"SPD appreciates the council vote today to reconcile the previously offered incentives," an SPD statement on Tuesday's council bill reads. "We look forward to future opportunities to discuss ways to improve staffing, including potential proposals around incentives."</p> <p>Councilmember Lisa Herbold confirmed in council session Tuesday that the mayor's office is reviewing the policy and expect to make an announcement on potential future hiring bonuses for public safety officers in mid-March.</p> <p>Although the program is no longer effective, an outstanding issue remains how to allocate the funds for bonuses offered after the new year. While the council's legislation effectively terminated the program post-Dec. 31, Durkan issued a directive at the end of last year to bypass the end date and continue to offer the hiring bonuses.</p> <p>"Based on consultations with legal Counsel, it has been concluded that the City Council's actions to limit the Emergency Order were not effective," Durkan's December order to interim Chief Adrian Diaz reads. "Thus, you should continue to hire and implement the terms of the Order, until incoming Mayor Harrell or the City Council effectively act extend or alter the terms of the Order."</p> <p>Councilmember Herbold claims to "not know" what Mayor Durkan meant when she referenced legal council in her directive. Herbold alleges that the consultation does not reference consultation with then-City Attorney Pete Holmes.</p> <p>"The directive from the former Mayor claims the Council's action to limit the executive order wasn't effective. This is inaccurate. She claimed that she had legal counsel to confirm her position and the City Attorney has assured us that they provided no such advice," Councilmember Herbold's public statement reads.</p>

	<p>“Section 10.02 of the Seattle Municipal Code governs civil emergencies, including the authority of the Mayor to issue proclamations of civil emergency. SMC 10.02.020 (B) grants the City Council the power to modify or reject the order.”</p> <p>Cleaning up a loose end to the drama, the council voted on Tuesday to unanimously approve those hiring bonuses offered directly by Durkan outside of the council’s authority.</p> <p>The ordinance allocates \$220,000 to pay the hiring bonuses for 14 911 dispatchers and 5 SPD officers brought on in January.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Push to back Ukraine in Middle East falters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-diplomatic-push-for-ukraine-falters-in-a-middle-east-influenced-by-russia-11646214130">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-diplomatic-push-for-ukraine-falters-in-a-middle-east-influenced-by-russia-11646214130</a>
GIST	<p>The Biden administration is <a href="#">pushing its closest Middle East partners</a> to back Ukraine in its deepening war with Russia and for help alleviating the economic fallout—without much to show for it.</p> <p>From the Persian Gulf’s oil-rich monarchies to Israel, U.S. allies and partners are staying neutral or tempering their criticism of Moscow in a revealing sign of Russia’s growing influence in the region.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia, the de facto OPEC leader, has <a href="#">rebuffed U.S. requests to pump more oil</a> to help tame surging crude prices, which <a href="#">topped \$100 a barrel</a> amid concerns over supply after <a href="#">Russia invaded Ukraine</a>. The United Arab Emirates, which hosts U.S. troops, ignored U.S. lobbying and abstained from a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the Russian invasion.</p> <p>Even Israel, the U.S.’s closest ally in the region, has refused a Ukrainian request for weapons and other military equipment, such as helmets and protective vests, according to Ukraine’s ambassador, Yevgen Korniyshuk. Israel fears that choosing sides too openly against Moscow could prompt Russian forces in Syria to respond by interfering with its long-running air campaign against Iranian-backed militias there, Israeli officials said.</p> <p>A senior U.S. official said the diplomatic response in the region has been more cautious than Washington would have preferred. But there is far more agreement than is visible publicly on steps to <a href="#">calm energy markets</a> and avoid economic shocks if Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> prolongs the conflict, the official said.</p> <p>“We are focused on ensuring we are putting maximum pressure on Russia and Putin, while mitigating the risk to the U.S. and the global economy,” the official said, adding that high-level talks with the Saudis and others are aimed at making “sure we are coordinated and understand each other’s actions.”</p> <p>While Saudi Arabia has pushed back against previous U.S. requests for additional oil supplies, officials at the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries say it isn’t expected to counter a move Tuesday by International Energy Agency members to <a href="#">release 60 million barrels of oil</a> from their emergency stockpiles in an attempt to tame prices. Meanwhile, Qatar, recently designated by the U.S. a non-NATO major ally—a title not given to the Saudis or Emiratis—has expressed openness to divert some gas shipments from Asia to Europe to help fill potential disruptions in Russian natural-gas supply, say people familiar with the talks between U.S. and Qatari officials.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the Ukraine invasion has highlighted how frayed the oil-for-security bargain between the U.S. and its Arab partners has become, with doubts about American staying power in the region. <a href="#">The U.S.’s abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan</a> last summer and its long-term foreign-policy goal of pivoting toward China has pushed many of its regional partners to seek out new security and economic ties.</p>

Russia in recent years stepped into that gap. Moscow has joined with key Middle East oil producers to better manage supply in a deal that has helped fuel a crude price rally. It has established partnerships with Saudi Arabia's main sovereign fund and oil company. Russia has offered alternatives to U.S. arms to Persian Gulf nations that are under threat from their neighbors, while intervening on the side of strongmen in the Syrian and Libyan civil wars.

"Putin has managed to create leverage with leaders across the Middle East that, despite spending billions, the U.S. has not been able to match," says Karen Young, a senior fellow at The Middle East Institute, a Washington think tank. "I think it's a real shock to the U.S."

Saudi Arabia doesn't want to jeopardize a deal between the oil cartel it leads, OPEC and Russia, an alliance called OPEC+, officials in Riyadh said. That pact, which allows for production increases of 400,000 barrels a day each month, has done little to stem the rise in oil prices and [the Saudis have pumped less than their share](#), according to the IEA.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's day-to-day ruler, told French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday that Riyadh [remains committed to continue an agreement with Moscow](#) on oil-production levels, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

"Saudi Arabia does not see any need to take an action and jeopardize this alliance," said a senior Saudi official.

U.S. efforts to sway Riyadh have been complicated by the [fraught relations](#) between President Biden and Prince Mohammed, known as MBS, who has been shunned by the U.S. president for his role in the death of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

"The fact that Biden refuses to acknowledge MBS as the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia makes the decision easier for MBS to take the side of Putin, who, despite some hiccups, has been closer to him," said a Saudi adviser.

The Biden administration has been working to rebuild relations with Saudis, sending high level delegations to Riyadh and arranging a Feb. 24 call between Mr. Biden and Saudi Arabia's King Salman, the U.S. official said.

The administration's relations with the U.A.E. have seemed even frostier, highlighted by the Emirati abstention from a U.N. Security Council vote condemning Moscow's invasion, despite direct appeals from U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"We believe that alignment and positioning will only lead to more violence," Anwar Gargash, a U.A.E. presidential adviser in a tweet on Sunday. "In the Ukrainian crisis, our priorities are to encourage all parties to adopt diplomacy and negotiate to find a political settlement that ends this crisis."

Abu Dhabi's decision to not back the resolution also appeared linked to its effort to win Moscow's backing for a separate U.N. resolution condemning missile and drone attacks against the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia by Houthi rebels in Yemen.

That resolution was approved by the Security Council on Monday, with Russian support. "The strong perception among diplomats was that there was a quid pro quo," said Peter Salisbury, a senior Yemen analyst at the International Crisis Group.

The U.A.E. foreign ministry didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

In another sign of the U.A.E distancing itself from Washington, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, the country's de facto ruler, spoke by phone Tuesday with Mr. Putin

about “bilateral relations,” the energy market and “developments in Ukraine,” according to the U.A.E. state news agency.

As Russian forces were closing in on Ukraine’s capital city, Kyiv, Sheikh Mohammed avoided any public criticism of Moscow, emphasizing to Mr. Putin “the need for a peaceful solution to the crisis,” the news agency said.

The Ukrainian request for weapons from Israel includes systems that would help Ukraine defend itself against Russian missiles, but not for Israel’s Iron Dome system, which is designed to intercept shorter range rockets and missiles, said Mr. Korniychuk, the Ukraine ambassador to Israel. “We are in huge need of self-defense weapons,” he said at a Tuesday press conference. “I do hope that Israel will consider positively all of our requests.”

“Israel has taken a measured and responsible approach, which allows us not only to protect our interests, but also to be useful...one of the few that can communicate directly with both parties,” Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Tuesday.

The longer the war continues, the more pressure U.S. partners and allies in the region are likely to face to align more closely with Washington. Though Russia has increased ties to the region, Moscow doesn’t offer the same long-term military support to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, said Ms. Young at the Middle East Institute.

“Russia doesn’t have the capacity to play that role, not now or in the future,” she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Children pay the price of Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-a-kyiv-hospital-children-pay-the-price-of-russias-invasion-11646147353">https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-a-kyiv-hospital-children-pay-the-price-of-russias-invasion-11646147353</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Krystyna Krayevska came to Kyiv from Poland, where she normally lives and works, for her niece Darynka’s sixth birthday in January. A few days later, Darynka was diagnosed with a brain tumor and, after complications following surgery, now lies on life support in Ukraine’s largest children’s hospital, Okhmatdyt.</p> <p>A clash just outside the medical facility between advancing Russian units and Ukrainian forces over the weekend left bullet holes in some of the hospital’s windows. Darynka, unable to breathe on her own, remains in the pediatric intensive-care unit upstairs. Ms. Krayevska spends her days on a cot in a basement that has been converted into a bomb shelter, next to other parents and children who could be moved to its relative safety.</p> <p>“I live in fear, but not for myself. Every morning I wake up, cross myself and pray that nothing hits the ICU room,” she said as yet another air-raid siren rang out, warning of an incoming Russian airstrike on this ancient city. “She is fighting for her life, up there, and we down here are fighting for our own lives, thanks to the Russian soldiers.”</p> <p>Kyiv hasn’t experienced the kind of indiscriminate shelling of civilian neighborhoods that devastated the country’s second-largest city, Kharkiv, on Monday and Tuesday. But as Russia pours new forces into Ukraine in its attempt to capture the capital and decapitate its democratically elected government, doctors here are bracing for an influx of casualties, children and adults alike. An entire area of the hospital complex, which usually caters to 20,000 children a year, has already been converted into an emergency trauma ward.</p> <p>“It’s just so vile,” said Okhmatdyt surgeon Volodymyr Vovkun. “We hope it won’t happen, but we are getting ready for the mass bombing of civilians here, too. We are watching the news and know that the situation is getting worse.”</p> <p>Hospital workers are bracing for an influx of casualties as Russian forces target Kyiv.</p>



Disruptions caused by the war are already exacting a heavy toll, said the hospital's director, Volodymyr Zhovnyakh. Diabetic children usually served by the hospital can no longer get insulin, and others have no access to baby formula. Some 10 children a day used to be operated on in Okhmatdyt for appendicitis every day, compared with one a day now, he added.

"These children are still here, but they cannot get help because they cannot reach the hospital, and they are just dying at home," Mr. Zhovnyakh said. "What is happening now in Ukraine is a humanitarian catastrophe caused by the war. The world is watching us, praying for us, and not doing much else. Ukraine, unfortunately, is on its own."

The breakdown in Kyiv's public-transport system—the metro is now used as a bomb shelter—means doctors and other staff have a hard time getting to work. They are now arranging to travel together in shared cars, and often sleep in the hospital's basement. Volunteers bring in water and food. On Tuesday morning, a local franchise of Domino's delivered a van full of pizzas for patients and staff.

Asked by a surgeon about her mood on Tuesday, one of the nurses raised her fist in a greeting of Spanish antifascists during the siege of Madrid in 1936 and said, "No Pasaran!" or "They shall not pass!" Madrid eventually fell in 1939.

In the basement shelter of the Okhmatdyt hospital, Valentyn Vetrov has been staying since Thursday with his 1-year-old son, Ilya, who has had more than 20 surgeries to fix birth defects. His eldest son is fighting in the Ukrainian army, he said. His wife and five other children have remained behind in the Azov Sea town of Berdyansk, which is now occupied by Russian troops.

"If not for the baby, I would be on the front lines too, fighting until my last breath," he said. "But for now my duty is here."

Sharing the basement with him was Ludmyla Kmetyuk, an entrepreneur from the western Ukrainian town of Khmelnytsky. Her 8-year-old son, Yaroslav, just had surgery for a brain tumor and needs physical therapy and other specialized care to be able to move on his own. That is impossible now, and Yaroslav lays listless on a blanket in the basement.

"What a shock. I never imagined that they would do this to us," Ms. Kmetyuk said. "Why? What have we done to them?"

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Kremlin-backed media faces crackdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/directv-drops-russia-backed-rt-from-its-pay-television-packages-11646164416?mod=hp_lead_pos11">https://www.wsj.com/articles/directv-drops-russia-backed-rt-from-its-pay-television-packages-11646164416?mod=hp_lead_pos11</a>
GIST	<p>RT and other Russia-backed media outlets are facing an unprecedented squeeze in response to <a href="#">Russia's invasion of Ukraine</a>, as pay TV operators and tech platforms across the globe take steps to curtail their reach.</p> <p>DirecTV said Tuesday it would drop RT, the Kremlin backed outfit previously known as Russia Today, from its pay-TV packages. Canadian telecommunications operators such as Shaw Communications and Telus Optik TV removed RT from their dials in recent days as did Australia's Foxtel.</p> <p>Technology platforms including <a href="#">Alphabet</a> Inc.'s YouTube, Facebook parent <a href="#">Meta Platforms</a> Inc., TikTok have moved to restrict access to the news outlet in Europe, following requests from the EU and European governments. Meta said Tuesday that it was beginning <a href="#">to demote RT world-wide</a> and make viewing across its platforms more difficult.</p> <p>Streaming distributor <a href="#">Roku</a> Inc. said Tuesday the company was removing RT from its channel store globally.</p>

The European Union announced a fuller expression of its sanctions against RT and fellow Kremlin-backed outlet Sputnik on Tuesday, saying the restrictions applied to all cable, satellite and web services. “We all stand for freedom of speech, but it cannot be abused to spread war propaganda,” said Věra Jourová, a vice president of the European Commission, the EU’s executive arm.

So far, the U.S. government hasn’t publicly issued any orders for companies to take action against Russian outlets.

Representatives for RT and Sputnik didn’t respond to requests for comment. RT has denied working on behalf of the Kremlin and has defended the accuracy of its broadcasts.

Recent RT broadcasts have referred to [invaded Ukrainian cities](#) as “liberated,” alleged a “genocide” against ethnic Russians in separatist regions of eastern Ukraine and focused on how EU sanctions against Russia would hurt the EU.

“They are pumping straight disinformation,” said Clint Watts, a fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and Alliance for Securing Democracy. He pointed to reports such as a recent documentary alleging that Russians found mass graves in Ukraine as part of a broader narrative justifying the invasion.

RT’s presence on the American media landscape has been particularly controversial since a 2017 U.S. intelligence report dubbed it the Kremlin’s “principal international propaganda outlet.” The report concluded that RT had been a central player in Russia’s efforts to disrupt the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

U.S. pay-TV providers said at the time that they [weren’t able to drop RT’s TV channel](#) because of a U.S. law that allowed broadcasters to demand carriage in lieu of being paid for their content. RT also paid distributors to be carried, The Wall Street Journal previously reported.

In 2017, Congress passed legislation that allowed cable-TV operators to decline carriage of programming owned, controlled or financed by the Russian government.

Subsequently, operators such as [Comcast Corp.](#) and [Charter Communications Inc.](#) stopped carrying RT, in many cases opting not to renew their contracts.

Other companies including DirecTV and rival [Dish Network Corp.](#) continued to carry RT.

While DirecTV dropped RT Tuesday, Dish and its streaming-TV service Sling still carried the network. Dish executives have been discussing whether to drop RT, a person familiar with the matter said.

“Our thoughts are with all the people of Ukraine, and particularly with our team members in the country. We are closely monitoring the situation,” a spokeswoman for Dish said in a written statement on Monday.

The National Association of Broadcasters, the trade group for the U.S. television and radio industries, on Tuesday called on local stations to stop carrying any state-sponsored programming with ties to the Russian government.

Regional cable-TV and internet provider Buckeye Broadband, which serves parts of Ohio and Michigan, one of the few remaining distributors of RT, said it didn’t plan to drop the network.

“We believe our responsibility is to present avenues of information and not to edit our customers’ access. Our carriage of the RT network is not an endorsement of the Russian government nor of its actions,” said Geoffrey Shook, president and general manager of Buckeye. He said Buckeye doesn’t pay RT for access nor receive any compensation for it.

Traditional television is just one way RT and other Russia-backed media outlets have reached American audiences. The U.S. intelligence report noted that RT had been particularly successful on YouTube. On Saturday, YouTube announced that it was pausing the ability for RT and other Russian-backed news outlets to make money from their content via advertising. Meta made a similar move.

In the U.S., RT's YouTube channel continued to serve live feeds on Tuesday, as did Facebook.

Facebook spokesman Andy Stone pointed to steps already taken to reduce access to RT and Sputnik content and plans to label Facebook Pages, Instagram accounts of Russian state media entities and posts with links to them.

A YouTube spokeswoman likewise pointed to the actions the service has taken against RT but had no comment on the availability of RT's live feeds in the U.S.

Up to now, the big tech platforms generally focused on labeling RT's content, not blocking it. YouTube began adding labels to state-run media, including RT, in 2018, and Facebook made a similar move in 2020. [Twitter](#) started labeling RT and other state-run media in August of 2020 and said it stopped including their content on various recommendations systems, effectively making it harder to find.

Twitter said Monday that it would label even more cases of content from state-sponsored outlets like RT and further reduce their distribution. A Twitter spokeswoman declined to comment on whether the company would take further action against RT.

[RT had also found a large U.S. audience](#) in recent years through the unwitting help of some of America's most prominent conservative websites, including RealClearPolitics, Daily Caller and Newsmax. Those websites joined a distribution network called Mixi.Media that allowed other members' content to be displayed on their home pages. After the Journal reported on this phenomenon—which several of the members said they weren't aware of—in 2020, Mixi removed RT from its network, according to Mixi's owner, Alex Baron.

RT.com's web presence has declined somewhat in recent years, dropping from 163 million visits worldwide in January 2019 to 132 million in January 2022 and from 12.3 million visits to 11.5 million in the U.S., [according to SimilarWeb](#), an internet analytics firm.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Hospitalizations down, but nurse shortages</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-hospitalizations-are-down-but-nurse-shortages-stretch-hospitals-11646217000?mod=hp_lead_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-hospitalizations-are-down-but-nurse-shortages-stretch-hospitals-11646217000?mod=hp_lead_pos4</a>
GIST	<p>PITTSBURGH— Louise Dobbins thought her job would feel less like being an air-traffic controller by now. But finding beds for patients in an overcrowded healthcare system is as hard as ever, she says.</p> <p>One recent morning, Ms. Dobbins was trying to find beds for 12 patients to transfer into Allegheny General Hospital, one of the biggest hospitals in Pittsburgh that takes many of the region's sickest patients. But the hospital was already running at 110% capacity.</p> <p>"I think people are under the misconception that because Covid has peaked and it's on the downturn that staffing issues will go away," said Ms. Dobbins, director of capacity management for Allegheny Health Network, a healthcare system in western Pennsylvania. "I don't think that's going to happen."</p> <p>At 10 a.m., Ms. Dobbins held her daily morning call with the health system's 14 hospitals to gauge each one's capacity challenges. Sitting in a room with a big screen that shows the number of beds filled and capacity percentages, Ms. Dobbins got an update from each hospital. At Allegheny General, there were already seven patients in the emergency department waiting for beds, including three who needed to go to the intensive-care unit.</p>

More than a month after the Covid-19 Omicron surge peaked and began to decline, and as states are [lifting Covid-related restrictions](#), the staffing crisis at many hospitals across the country is still running high. A shortage of nurses and other staff means fewer beds are available for patients.

[Hospitalization counts have plunged](#) as the Omicron wave recedes. By Monday, the seven-day average for hospitalized people with confirmed and suspected Covid-19 cases in the U.S. was 49,900, down 69% from an all-time high that topped 159,000 five weeks earlier, according to data from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Hospitals from Los Angeles to New York have reported [staffing shortages](#). In 15 states, a third or more of hospitals said they had a critical staffing shortage last month, according to the American Hospital Association. Nurses are among the positions in greatest demand and two-thirds of hospitals across the country have a nurse vacancy rate of 7.5% or more, the association said.

Allegheny General, for example, has only enough personnel to cover about 370 beds, far fewer than the 522 beds the hospital is licensed for, according to Ms. Dobbins.

The pressures have eased since early January, when the health system in Pennsylvania had about 300 Covid-positive patients and more than 50 requests by 7 a.m. each day to transfer patients from mostly smaller hospitals, while dozens waited for beds in emergency departments. Today, the health system has about 130 Covid-positive patients and about 20 total transfer requests on a typical morning.

But staffing and capacity issues are still more strained than earlier in the pandemic. Allegheny Health Network currently has about 1,200 openings for nurses, for example, more than three times as many as a year ago.

Managing the system requires a combination of daily triage and efforts—some of them costly and some still untested—to bring in more nurses and retain existing staff.

Claire Zangerle, chief nurse executive for the health system, said that in the past year she has lost about 350 nurses who decided to [work as travel nurses](#), who travel to other locations and work short-term contracts for higher pay. She has been forced to hire about 400 travel nurses herself as a result, and she has orders out to hire 75 more.

Ms. Zangerle says she pays agencies between \$150 and \$225 an hour per travel nurse, compared with a staff nurse who might earn \$35 to \$60 an hour, pushing up labor costs. In 2021, the health system spent \$57 million on premium pay for traveling nurses and incentives for current staff nurses, up from about \$18 million in 2020, Ms. Zangerle said.

Allegheny Health Network had an operating loss of \$136 million in 2020, and a loss of \$9 million through the first six months of 2021, as patient volumes improved. But labor costs remain high, prompting Ms. Zangerle and others to lobby state lawmakers for help. In January, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf signed a bill directing [\\$225 million in pandemic-relief funds](#) to be used to help hospitals and health systems struggling to pay for staff.

Ms. Zangerle said she believes the prices being charged by brokers for travel nurses are excessive. “We’re feeding the beast,” she said. “We need to fill our shifts.”

Meanwhile, at Allegheny General, the health system is paying about \$100,000 a month to nurses in penalties for being over a nurse-to-patient ratio required by a contract at the unionized hospital. The ICU, however, always stays within a ratio of one nurse per one or two patients, say administrators and nurses.

Last week, Ms. Zangerle announced a new program aimed at retaining the 110 students who will graduate in May with a nursing diploma from the health system’s nursing schools. The 16-month program costs students \$30,000, and the health system is now offering to cover tuition loans to nurses who agree to work for three years at the bedside, the toughest job to fill.

	<p>Under another new program, nurses can earn \$5 an hour more, up from \$1.25 an hour at most, for working steady nights or weekends. Allegheny General is also offering nurses an incentive for working more than 36 hours a week, which currently amounts to \$16 per hour for the extra hours. Nurses also earn time and a half on their base pay over 40 hours a week.</p> <p>Matt Komorowski, 22, said he has been picking up extra shifts in the ICU. For some weeks, he said he has been able to boost his regular pay of \$28 an hour to well over \$50 an hour for those extra hours.</p> <p>He said the incentive pay is nice, but as someone who has been on the job for about eight months, he said it is a challenge whenever a more experienced nurse leaves the unit to take a travel job—sometimes to a rival hospital in Pittsburgh.</p> <p>“It can definitely be very stressful if a lot of people on the floor that day are newer,” he said. “You have to learn on the go.”</p> <p>While the number of Covid patients at hospitals such as Allegheny General have fallen overall in recent weeks, some still need ICU services. On a recent day when three patients in the hospital’s emergency department were waiting for an ICU bed, a 53-year-old patient with Covid died in the ICU.</p> <p>Nurse Morgan Veglia, 23, said that within 30 minutes of taking her patient to the morgue, she had a new patient who had suffered an overdose. Down in the emergency department, she said, there was one less person waiting for a bed.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Eurozone inflation climbs to fresh high</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/eurozone-inflation-climbs-to-fresh-high-as-russian-invasion-confronts-ecb-with-dilemma-11646215595?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/eurozone-inflation-climbs-to-fresh-high-as-russian-invasion-confronts-ecb-with-dilemma-11646215595?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>The eurozone’s inflation rate jumped to a new high in February, presenting the European Central Bank with a difficult choice between supporting flagging growth and clamping down on accelerating prices driven by the threat to energy supplies following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia accounts for around 40% of the European Union’s imports of natural gas, <a href="#">a key source of energy for the bloc</a>. It also supplies around a quarter of the bloc’s oil imports. While supplies of oil and gas have continued to flow from Russia into Europe, <a href="#">market prices have jumped</a> to reflect worries about future availability.</p> <p>The European Union’s statistics agency Wednesday said consumer prices were 5.8% higher in February than a year earlier, an acceleration from the 5.1% rate of inflation recorded in January. It was <a href="#">the fourth straight month in which the inflation rate hit a record high</a>, and probably not the last.</p> <p>The <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> will add to upward pressure on inflation,” said Andrew Kenningham, an economist at Capital Economics. “The biggest impact will be via gas and oil prices, both of which are <a href="#">likely to be higher for longer</a> than previously expected. Any disruption to the supply of gas from Russia could cause prices to surge again.”</p> <p>Much of the pickup in inflation has been driven by energy prices, which were 31.7% higher than a year earlier, having been 28% higher in January. That was also the fastest annual increase in a series that goes back to 1997.</p> <p>As they prepared their plans for 2022, policy makers at the ECB had been counting on a decline in energy prices—as demand for winter heating fuels eased toward the end of this month—to help reverse the rise in the eurozone’s inflation rate and bring it back to its 2% target by the end of this year.</p>

But first the threat, and then the fact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has dashed those hopes. Economists at Capital Economics now expect the annual rate of inflation to peak at more than 6% this month, and remain above 5% until the final three months of the year.

Economists at [JPMorgan](#) said they now expect the average rate of inflation in 2022 to be 1 percentage point higher than they did before the invasion at 5%. By contrast, the ECB's December forecast for inflation this year was 3.2%, well above its 2% target.

But economic growth is also likely to turn out weaker than the ECB had expected. JPMorgan said it now expects the eurozone economy to stagnate in the three months through March, having previously forecast an annualized increase in gross domestic product of 1%. It also lowered its growth forecasts for subsequent quarters.

That presents the ECB with a dilemma. It could tackle inflation by [winding down its bond-buying program](#) and open the way for a rise in its key interest rate later this year or early next. But that would likely exacerbate the slowdown in growth, and threaten a sharp decline in inflation back below its target next year.

Alternatively, the ECB can leave its stimulus measures in place and tolerate a period of very high inflation to cushion the economy against the fallout from Russia's war. But that might persuade eurozone workers that inflation is set to remain high for an indefinite period, and inspire them to ask for significantly higher wage rises than they have secured over recent decades. Big wage rises might prompt another round of price increases as businesses seek to cover their higher costs.

However, there is little sign that workers are getting larger pay rises. Germany's statistics agency Tuesday said that annual pay rises negotiated by labor unions or similar groups amounted to just 1.1% in the three months through December.

Before the invasion, the ECB had signaled it was likely to choose the first course of action, and announce a timetable for ending its bond buys at its March 10 meeting. But many economists now think that unlikely, given the mounting threats to eurozone economic growth.

"The dramatic conflict in Ukraine is now weighing negatively on both supply and demand conditions, making uncertainty more acute," said Fabio Panetta, an ECB policy maker in a speech Monday. "In this environment, it would be unwise to pre-commit on future policy steps until the fallout from the current crisis becomes clearer."

European government bonds rallied Tuesday as investors bet the ECB would delay hiking interest rates. The benchmark 10-year German bund yield declined to minus 0.031% on Tuesday after spending the past four weeks in positive territory. The equivalent French, Italian and Spanish government bond yields also dropped. Yields fall when prices rise.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Full transcript State of the Union address
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/politics/biden-sotu-transcript.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/politics/biden-sotu-transcript.html</a>
GIST	<p><i>President Biden delivered his annual <a href="#">State of the Union address</a> on Tuesday to a joint session of Congress. The following is a transcript of his remarks, as recorded by The New York Times.</i></p> <p>PRESIDENT BIDEN: Madam Speaker, Madam Vice President and our first lady and second gentleman. Members of Congress and the cabinet. Justices of the Supreme Court. My fellow Americans.</p> <p>Last year, Covid-19 kept us apart. This year, we are finally together again.</p> <p>Tonight, we meet as Democrats, Republicans and Independents. But most importantly, as Americans. With a duty to one another, to America, to the American people, to the Constitution.</p>



And an unwavering resolve that freedom will always triumph over tyranny.

Six days ago, Russia's Vladimir Putin sought to shake the very foundations of the free world, thinking he could make it bend to his menacing ways. But he badly miscalculated.

He thought he could roll into Ukraine, and the world would roll over. Instead, he met with a wall of strength he never anticipated or imagined.

He met the Ukrainian people.

From President Zelensky to every Ukrainian, their fearlessness, their courage, their determination, literally inspires the world.

Groups of citizens blocking tanks with their bodies. Everyone from students to retirees to teachers turned soldiers defending their homeland.

In this struggle, as President Zelensky said in his speech to the European Parliament, "light will win over darkness." The Ukrainian ambassador to the United States is here tonight, sitting with the first lady.

Let each of us here, if you're able to stand, stand and send an unmistakable signal to the world and Ukraine.

Yes, we, the United States of America, stand with the Ukrainian people.

Throughout our history we've learned this lesson: When dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos.

They keep moving.

And the costs, the threats to America, and America to the world, keeps rising.

That's why the NATO alliance was created: to secure peace and stability in Europe after World War II.

The United States is a member, along with 29 other nations.

It matters. American diplomacy matters. American resolve matters.

Putin's latest attack on Ukraine was premeditated and totally unprovoked.

He rejected repeated, repeated efforts at diplomacy.

He thought the West and NATO wouldn't respond. He thought he could divide us at home, in this chamber and in this nation. He thought he could divide us in Europe as well. But Putin was wrong. We are ready. We are united, and that's what we did. We stayed united.

We prepared extensively and carefully.

We spent months building a coalition of other freedom-loving nations in Europe and the Americas to the Asian and African continents to confront Putin.

Like many of you, I spent countless hours unifying our European allies. We shared with the world in advance what we knew Putin was planning, and precisely how he would try to falsify and justify his aggression.

We countered Russia's lies with the truth.

And now that he has acted, the free world is holding him accountable.

Along with 27 members of the European Union, including France, Germany, Italy, as well as countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand and many others — even Switzerland — are inflicting pain on Russia and supporting the people of Ukraine. Putin is now isolated from the world more than he has ever been.

Together, along with our allies, we are right now enforcing powerful economic sanctions.

We are cutting off Russia's largest banks from the international financial system, preventing Russia's central bank from defending the Russian ruble, making Putin's \$630 billion war fund worthless.

We are choking Russia's access to technology that will sap its economic strength and weaken its military for years to come.

Tonight, I say to the Russian oligarchs and the corrupt leaders who bilked billions of dollars off this violent regime: no more.

The United States Department of Justice is assembling a dedicated task force to go after the crimes of the Russian oligarchs.

We're joining with European allies to find and seize their yachts, their luxury apartments, their private jets. We are coming for your ill-begotten gains.

And tonight, I am announcing that we will join our allies in closing off American airspace to all Russian flights, further isolating Russia and adding an additional squeeze on their economy. He has no idea what's coming.

The ruble has already lost 30 percent of its value.

The Russian stock market has lost 40 percent of its value, and trading remains suspended. The Russian economy is reeling, and Putin alone is the one to blame.

Together with our allies, we are providing support to the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom. Military assistance. Economic assistance. Humanitarian assistance.

We are giving more than \$1 billion in direct assistance to Ukraine, and will continue to aid the Ukrainian people as they defend their country and help ease their suffering.

But let me be clear: Our forces are not engaged and will not engage in the conflict with Russian forces in Ukraine.

Our forces are not going to Europe to fight in Ukraine, but to defend our NATO allies in the event that Putin decides to keep moving west.

For that purpose, we've mobilized American ground forces, air squadrons, ship deployments to protect NATO countries, including Poland, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

And as I have made crystal clear: The United States and our allies will defend every inch of territory that is NATO territory with the full force of our collective power. Every single inch.

And we're cleareyed. The Ukrainians are fighting back with pure courage. But the next few days, weeks and months will be hard on them.

Putin has unleashed violence and chaos. But while he may make gains on the battlefield, he will pay a continuing high price over the long run.

And a proud, proud people, pound-for-pound ready to fight with every inch of energy they have — they have known 30 years of independence, have repeatedly shown that they will not tolerate anyone who tries to take their country backwards.

To all Americans, I will be honest with you, as I always promised I would be. A Russian dictator, invading a foreign country, has costs around the world.

And I'm taking robust action to make sure the pain of our sanctions is targeted at Russian economy. And I will use every tool at our disposal to protect American businesses and consumers.

Tonight, I can announce that the United States has worked with 30 other countries to release 60 million barrels of oil from reserves around the world.

America will lead that effort, releasing 30 million barrels from our own Strategic Petroleum Reserve. And we stand ready to do more if necessary, unified with our allies.

These steps will help blunt gas prices here at home. But I know the news about what's happening can seem alarming to all Americans.

But I want you to know that we are going to be OK. We are going to be OK.

When the history of this era is written, Putin's war on Ukraine will have left Russia weaker and the rest of the world stronger.

While it shouldn't have taken something so terrible for people around the world to see what's at stake, now everyone sees it clearly.

We see the unity among leaders of nations, a more unified Europe, a more unified West. We see unity among the people who are gathering in cities, in large crowds around the world — even in Russia — to demonstrate their support for the people of Ukraine.

In the battle between democracy and autocracies, democracies are rising to the moment, and the world is clearly choosing the side of peace and security.

This is the real test. It's going to take time. So let us continue to draw inspiration from the iron will of the Ukrainian people.

To our fellow Ukrainian Americans, who forged a deep bond that connects our two nations. we stand with you. We stand with you.

Putin may circle Kyiv with tanks, but he'll never gain the hearts and souls of the Iranian people.

He'll never extinguish their love of freedom. And he will never, never weaken the resolve of the free world.

We meet tonight in an America that has lived through two of the hardest years this nation has ever faced.

The pandemic has been punishing.

And so many families are living paycheck to paycheck, struggling to keep up with the rising cost of food, gas, housing and so much more.

I understand like many of you did.

My dad had to leave his home in Scranton, Pa., to find work. So like many of you, I grew up in a family when the price of food went up, it was felt throughout the family. It had an impact.

That's why one of the first things I did as president was fight to pass the American Rescue Plan.

Because people were hurting. We needed to act, and we did.

Few pieces of legislation have done more at a critical moment in our history to lift us out of crisis.

It fueled our efforts to vaccinate the nation and combat Covid-19. It delivered immediate economic relief to tens of millions of Americans.

It helped put food on the table — remember those long lines of cars waiting for hours just to get a box of food put in their trunk. It cut the cost of health insurance.

And as my dad used to say, it gave the people just a little breathing room.

Unlike the \$2 trillion tax cut passed in the previous administration that benefited the top 1 percent of Americans, the American Rescue Plan helped working people — and left no one behind.

And it worked. It created jobs — lots of jobs.

In fact, our economy created over 6.5 million new jobs just last year, more jobs created in one year than ever before in the history of the United States of America.

The economy grew at a rate of 5.7 last year, the strongest growth rate in nearly 40 years, the first step in bringing fundamental change to our economy that hasn't worked for the working people of this nation for too long.

For the past 40 years, we were told that tax breaks for those at the top and benefits would trickle down, and everyone would benefit.

But that trickle-down theory led to a weaker economic growth, lower wages, bigger deficits and a widening gap between those at the top and everyone else in nearly a century.

Look, Vice President Harris and I ran for office — and I realized we had fundamental disagreements on this — but ran for office with a new economic vision for America.

Invest in America. Educate Americans. Grow the work force. Build the economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down.

Because we know that when the middle class grows, the poor have a ladder up, and the wealthy do very well.

America used to have the best roads, bridges and airports on earth.

Now our infrastructure is ranked 13th in the world.

We won't be able to compete for the jobs of the 21st century if we don't fix it.

That's why it was so important to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law — and I thank my Republican colleagues who joined to invest and rebuild America, the single biggest investment in history.

This was a bipartisan effort, and I want to thank the members of both parties who worked to make it happen.

We're done talking about infrastructure weeks.

We're now talking about an infrastructure decade.

It is going to transform America, to put us on a path to win the economic competition of the 21st century that we face with the rest of the world — particularly China.

I've told Xi Jinping, it is never a good bet to bet against the American people.

We'll create good jobs for millions of Americans, modernizing roads, airports, ports, waterways all across America.

And we'll do it all to withstand the devastating effects of climate change and promote environmental justice.

We'll build a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations, begin to replace the poisonous lead pipes, so every child — every American — has clean water to drink at home and at school. We're going to provide affordable high-speed internet for every American — rural, urban, suburban and tribal communities.

Four thousand projects have already been announced. Many of you have announced them in your districts.

And tonight, I'm announcing that this year we will start fixing over 65,000 miles of highway and 1,500 bridges in disrepair.

When we use taxpayers' dollars to rebuild America, we are going to do it by buying American: buy American products, support American jobs.

The federal government spends about \$600 billion a year to keep this country safe and secure.

There's been a law on the books for almost a century to make sure taxpayers' dollars support American jobs and businesses.

Every administration, Democrat and Republican, says they'll do it, but we are actually doing it.

We will buy American to make sure everything from the deck of an aircraft carrier to the steel on highway guardrails is made in America from beginning to end. All of it. All of it.

But folks, to compete for the jobs of the future, we also need to level the playing field with China and other competitors.

That's why it is so important to pass the Bipartisan Innovation Act sitting in Congress that will make record investments in emerging technologies and American manufacturing. We used to invest 2 percent of our G.D.P. in research and development. We don't now. China is.

Let me give you one example of why it's so important to pass it.

If you travel 20 miles east of Columbus, Ohio, you'll find 1,000 empty acres of land.

It won't look like much, but if you stop and look closely, you'll see a field of dreams, the ground on which America's future will be built.

That's where Intel, the American company that helped build Silicon Valley, is going to build its \$20 billion semiconductor mega site.

Up to eight state-of-the-art factories in one place. Ten thousand new jobs. In those factories, the average job: about \$135,000 a year.

Some of the most sophisticated manufacturing in the world to make computer chips the size of a fingertip that power the world and everyday lives.

From smartphones. The internet. Technology we have yet to invent.

But that's just the beginning.

Intel's C.E.O., Pat Gelsinger, who is here tonight — Pat told me they are ready to increase their investment from \$20 billion to \$100 billion.

That would be the biggest investment in manufacturing in American history.

And all they're waiting for is for you to pass this bill.

So let's not wait any longer. Send it to my desk. I'll sign it.

And we will really take off in a big way.

And folks, Intel is not alone.

There's something happening in America.

Just look around, and you'll see an amazing story.

The rebirth of pride that comes from stamping products "Made in America." The revitalization of American manufacturing.

Companies are choosing to build new factories here, when just a few years ago, they would have gone overseas.

That's what is happening. Ford is investing \$11 billion in electric vehicles, creating 11,000 jobs across the country.

G.M. is making the largest investment in its history: \$7 billion to build electric vehicles, creating 4,000 jobs in Michigan.

All told, 369,000 new manufacturing jobs in America last year alone.

Powered by people I've met like JoJo Burgess, from generations of union steelworkers from Pittsburgh, who's here with us tonight.

As Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown says, "It's time to bury the label 'Rust Belt.'"

It's time to see what used to be called the Rust Belt become the home of significant resurgence of manufacturing.

But with all the bright spots in our economy, record job growth, higher wages, too many families are struggling to keep up with the bills.

Inflation is robbing them of the gains they thought otherwise they would be able to feel.

I get it. That's why my top priority is getting prices under control.



Look, our economy roared back faster than almost anyone predicted, but the pandemic meant that businesses had a hard time hiring enough workers to keep up production in their factories.

So you didn't have people making those beams that went into buildings because they were out, the factory was closed. The panic also disrupted the global supply chain.

Factories close. When that happens, it takes longer to make goods and get them to the warehouses, to the stores, and prices go up.

Look at cars last year.

One-third of all of the inflation was because of automobile sales. There weren't enough semiconductors to make all the cars that people wanted to buy.

And guess what, prices of automobiles went way up. Especially used vehicles as well.

So, we have a choice.

One way to fight inflation is to drive down wages and make Americans poorer.

I think I have a better idea to fight inflation.

Lower your cost, not your wages.

That means make more cars and semiconductors in America.

More infrastructure and innovation in America.

More goods moving faster and cheaper in America.

More jobs where you can earn a good living in America.

Instead of relying on foreign supply chains, let's make it in America.

Economists call it "increasing the productive capacity of our economy."

I call it building a better America.

My plan to fight inflation will lower your costs and lower the deficit.

Seventeen Nobel laureates in economics said my plan will ease long-term inflationary pressures. Top business leaders and I believe most Americans support my plan. And here's the plan:

First, cut the cost of prescription drugs. We pay more for the same drug produced by the same company in America than any other country in the world. Just look at insulin. One in 10 Americans has diabetes. In Virginia, I met a 13-year-old boy, the handsome young man up there, Joshua Davis.

He and his dad both have Type 1 diabetes, which means they need insulin every single day. Insulin costs about \$10 a vial to make. That's what it costs the pharmaceutical company.

But drug companies charge families like Joshua and his dad up to 30 times that amount. I spoke with Joshua's mom.

Imagine what it's like to look at your child who needs insulin to stay healthy and have no idea how in God's name you're going to be able to pay for it.

What it does to your family, but what it does to your dignity, your ability to look your child in the eye, to be the parent you expect yourself to be. I really mean that, think about that. That's what I think about.

You know, yesterday, Joshua is here tonight, but yesterday was his birthday. Happy birthday, buddy, by the way.

For Joshua, and for the 200,000 other young people with Type 1 diabetes, let's cap the cost of insulin at \$35 a month so everyone can afford it.

And drug companies will do very, very well — their profit margins. And while we're at it, let's let Medicare negotiate the price of prescription drugs. They already set the price for V.A. drugs.

Look, the American Rescue Plan is helping millions of families on Affordable Care Act plans to save them \$2,400 a year on their health care premiums. Let's close the coverage gap and make these savings permanent.

Second, cut energy costs for families an average of \$500 a year by combating climate change.

Let's provide investment tax credits to weatherize your home and your business to be energy efficient and get a tax credit for it; double America's clean energy production in solar, wind and so much more; lower the price of electric vehicles, saving you another \$80 a month that you'll never have to pay at the pump.

The third thing we can do to change the standard of living for hard-working folks is cut the cost of child care. Cut the cost of child care. Folks, if you live in a major city in America, you pay up to \$14,000 a year for child care per child.

I was a single dad for five years raising two kids. I had a lot of help, though. I had a mom, a dad, a brother and a sister that really helped.

Middle-class and working folks shouldn't have to pay more than 7 percent of their income to care for their young children.

My plan would cut the cost in half for most families and help parents, including millions of women, who left the work force during the pandemic because they couldn't afford child care, to be able to get back to work. Generating economic growth.

But my plan doesn't stop there. It also includes home and long-term care. More affordable housing. Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds.

All of these will lower costs for families.

And under my plan, nobody — let me say this again: nobody — earning less than \$400,000 a year will pay an additional penny in new taxes. Not a single penny.

I may be wrong, but my guess is if we took a secret ballot in this floor that we'd agree that the present tax system ain't fair. We have to fix it.

I'm not looking to punish anybody. But let's make corporations and wealthy Americans start paying their fair share.

Look, last year — like Chris Coons and Tom Carper and my distinguished congresswoman, we come from the land of corporate America. There are more corporations in incorporated America than every other state in America combined. And I still won 36 years in a row.

The point is even they understand they should pay just the fair share. Last year, 55 of the Fortune 500 companies earned \$40 billion in profit and paid zero in federal taxes. Look, it's not fair. That's why I proposed a 15 percent minimum tax rate for corporations.

And that's why in the G7 and other meetings overseas we're able to put together, I was able to be somewhat helpful, 130 countries to agree on a global minimum tax rate so companies can't get out of paying their taxes at home by shipping jobs and factories overseas. It'll raise billions of dollars.

That's why I've proposed closing loopholes so the very wealthy don't pay a lower tax rate than a teacher or a firefighter.

So that's my plan, but we'll go into more detail later. We will grow the economy and lower the costs for families.

So what are we waiting for? Let's get this done. We all know we got to make changes. And while you're at it, confirm my nominees for the Federal Reserve, which plays a critical role in fighting inflation.

My plan will not only lower costs and give families a fair shot; it will lower the deficit

The previous administration not only ballooned the deficit with those tax cuts for the very wealthy and corporations, it undermined the watchdogs whose job was to keep pandemic relief funds from being wasted.

Remember we had those debates about whether or not those watchdogs should be able to see every day how much money was being spent, whether it was going to the right place?

But in my administration, the watchdogs are back.

And we're going to go after the criminals who stole billions in relief money meant for small businesses and millions of Americans.

And tonight, I'm announcing that the Justice Department will soon name a chief prosecutor for pandemic fraud.

By the end of this year, the deficit will be down to less than half of what it was before I took office.

The only president ever to cut the deficit by more than \$1 trillion in a single year.

Lowering your costs also meant demanding more competition.

I'm a capitalist, but capitalism without competition isn't capitalism.

Capitalism without competition is exploitation — it drives up profits.

And corporations have to compete, their profits go up and your prices go up when they don't have to compete.

Small businesses and family farmers and ranchers I need not tell some of my Republican friends from those states, guess what, you got four basic meat packing facilities. That's it. You play with them or you don't get to play at all. And you pay a hell of a lot more. A hell of a lot more because there's only four.

See what's happening with ocean carriers moving goods in and out of America.

During the pandemic, about half a dozen or less foreign-owned companies raised prices by as much as 1,000 percent and made record profits.

Tonight, I'm announcing a crackdown on those companies overcharging American businesses and consumers.

And as Wall Street firms take over more nursing homes, quality in those homes has gone down and costs have gone up.

That ends on my watch.

Medicare is going to set higher standards for nursing homes and make sure your loved ones get the care they deserve and that they expect.

We're also going to cut costs to keep the economy going strong and give workers a fair shot, provide more training and apprenticeships, hire them based on their skills not just their degrees.

Let's pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and paid leave.

Raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and extend the Child Tax Credit, so no one has to raise a family in poverty.

Let's increase Pell grants and increase our historic support for H.B.C.U.s, and invest in what Jill — our first lady who teaches full-time — calls America's best-kept secret: community colleges.

Let's pass the PRO Act when a majority of workers want to form a union — they shouldn't be able to be stopped.

When we invest in our workers, when we build the economy from the bottom up and the middle out together, we can do something we haven't done in a long time: build a better America.

For more than two years, Covid has impacted every decision in our lives and the life of this nation.

And I know you're tired, frustrated and exhausted. That doesn't even count the close to a million people who sit at a dining room table or a kitchen table looking at an empty chair because they lost somebody.

But I also know this.

Because of the progress we've made, because of your resilience and the tools that we have been provided by this Congress, tonight I can say we are moving forward safely, back to more normal routines.

We've reached a new moment in the fight against COVID-19, where severe cases down to a level not seen since last July.

Just a few days ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new mask guidelines.

Under these new guidelines, most Americans in most of the country can now go mask free.

And based on projections, more of the country will reach across that point across the next couple of weeks.

Thanks to the progress we have made in the past year, Covid-19 no longer need control our lives.

I know some are talking about living with Covid-19. But tonight I say that we will never just accept living with Covid-19.

We'll continue to combat the virus as we do other diseases. And because this virus mutates and spreads, we have to stay on guard.

And here are four common sense steps as we move forward safely, in my view.

First, stay protected with vaccines and treatments. We know how incredibly effective vaccines are. If you're vaccinated and boosted, you have the highest degree of protection.

We will never give up on vaccinating more Americans. Now, I know parents with kids under 5 are eager to see their vaccines authorized for their children.

The scientists are working hard to get that done, and we'll be ready with plenty of vaccines if and when they do.

We're also ready with anti-viral treatments. If you get Covid-19, the Pfizer pill reduces your chances of ending up in the hospital by 90 percent.

I've ordered more of these pills than anyone in the world has. Pfizer is working overtime to get us one million pills this month and more than double that next month.

And we're launching the "test to treat" initiative so people can get tested at a pharmacy, and if they prove positive, receive antiviral pills on the spot at no cost.

If you're immunocompromised or have some other vulnerability, we have treatments and free high-quality masks.

We're leaving no one behind or ignoring anyone's needs as we move forward.

On testing, we have made hundreds of millions of tests available, and you can order them for free to your doorstep.

And if you already ordered free tests tonight, I'm announcing you can order another group of tests. Go to [covidtest.gov](https://www.covidtest.gov) starting next week and you can get more tests.

Second, we must prepare for new variants. Over the past, we've gotten much better at detecting new variants.

If necessary, we'll be able to develop new vaccines within 100 days instead of maybe months or years.

And, if Congress provides the funds we need, we'll have new stockpiles of tests, masks, pills ready if needed.

I cannot promise a new variant won't come. But I can promise you we'll do everything within our power to be ready if it does.

Third, we can end the shutdown of schools and businesses. We have the tools we need.

It's time for America to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again with people. People working from home can feel safe and begin to return to their offices.

We're doing that here in the federal government. The vast majority of federal workers will once again work in person.

Our schools are open. Let's keep it that way. Our kids need to be in school.

And with 75 percent of adult Americans fully vaccinated and hospitalizations down by 77 percent, most Americans can remove their masks and stay in the classroom, and move forward safely.

We achieved this because we provided free vaccines, treatments, tests and masks.

Of course, continuing this costs money. So I'll not surprise you, I'll be back to see you all.

And I'm going to soon send Congress a request.

The vast majority of Americans have used these tools and may want again, we may need them again, so I expect Congress and I hope you'll pass that quickly.

Fourth, we'll continue vaccinating the world.

We've sent 475 million vaccine doses to 112 countries, more than any nation on earth.

We won't stop. Because you can't build a wall high enough to keep out a vaccine — the vaccine can stop the spread of these diseases.

You know, we've lost so much to Covid-19. Time with one another. And worst of all, much loss of life.

Let's use this moment to reset. So stop looking at Covid as a partisan dividing line. See it for what it is: a God-awful disease.

Let's stop seeing each other as enemies, and start seeing each other for who we are: fellow Americans.

We can't change how divided we've been. It was a long time in coming. But we can change how to move forward — on Covid-19 and other issues that we must face together.

I recently visited the New York City Police Department days after the funerals of Officer Wilbert Mora and his partner, Officer Jason Rivera.

They were responding to a 911 call when a man shot and killed them with a stolen gun.

Officer Mora was 27 years old.

Officer Rivera was 22 years old.

Both Dominican Americans who grew up on the same streets they later chose to patrol as police officers.

I spoke with their families and I told them that we are forever in debt for their sacrifices, and we'll carry on their mission to restore the trust and safety of every community deserves.

Like some of you that have been around for a while, I've worked with you for on these issues a long time.

I know what works: Investigating crime prevention and community policing. Cops who'll walk the beat, who know the neighborhood and who can restore trust and safety.

Let's not abandon our streets, or choose between safety and equal justice.

Let's come together and protect our communities, restore trust and hold law enforcement accountable.

That's why the Justice Department has required body cameras, banned chokeholds and restricted no-knock warrants for its officers.

That's why the American Rescue Plan that you all provided \$350 billion that cities, states and counties can use to hire more police, invest in proven strategies. Proven strategies like community violence interruption — trusted messengers breaking the cycle of violence and trauma and giving young people some hope.

We should all agree: The answer is not to defund the police. It's to fund the police. Fund them. Fund them. Fund them with resources and training. Resources and training they need to protect their communities.

I ask Democrats and Republicans alike to pass my budget and keep our neighborhoods safe.

And we'll do everything in my power to crack down on gun trafficking, of ghost guns that you can buy online, assemble at home — no serial numbers, can't be traced.

I ask Congress to pass proven measures to reduce gun violence. Pass universal background checks. Why should anyone on the terrorist list be able to purchase a weapon? Why? Why?

And folks, ban assault weapons with high-capacity magazines that hold up to a hundred rounds. You think the deer are wearing Kevlar vests?

Look, repeal the liability shield that makes gun manufacturers the only industry in America that can't be sued. The only one.

Imagine had we done that with the tobacco manufacturers.

These laws don't infringe on the Second Amendment. They save lives.

The most fundamental right in America is the right to vote — and have it counted. And look, it's under assault.

In state after state, new laws have been passed, not only to suppress the vote — we've been there before — but to subvert the entire election.

We can't let this happen.

Tonight, I call on the Senate to pass the Freedom to Vote Act. Pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. And while you're at it, pass the Disclose Act so Americans know who is funding our elections.

Look, tonight, I'd like to honor someone who has dedicated his life to serve this country: Justice Breyer — an Army veteran, constitutional scholar, retiring justice of the United States Supreme Court. Justice Breyer, thank you for your service.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I mean it. Get up. Stand up so they can see you. Thank you.

We all know — no matter what your ideology — we all know, one of the most serious constitutional responsibility a president has is nominating someone to serve on the United States Supreme Court.

As I did four days ago, I've nominated the Circuit Court of Appeals Ketanji Brown Jackson. One of our nation's top legal minds, who will continue in Justice Breyer's legacy of excellence.

A former top litigator in private practice. A former federal public defender. From a family of public school educators and police officers. She's a consensus builder. Since she's been nominated, she's received a broad range of support — including the Fraternal Order of Police and former judges appointed by Democrats and Republicans.

Folks, if we are to advance liberty and justice, we need to secure our border and fix the immigration system.

And as you might guess, I think we can do both. At our border, we've installed new technology like cutting-edge scanners to better detect drug smuggling.

We've set up joint patrols with Mexico and Guatemala to catch more human traffickers.



We're putting in place dedicated immigration judges in significant larger number so families fleeing persecution and violence can have their cases heard faster and those who don't legitimately here can be sent back.

We're screening, we're securing commitments and supporting partners in South and Central America to host more refugees and secure their own borders.

We can do all this while keeping lit the torch of liberty that has led the generation of immigrants to this land — my forebears and many of yours.

Provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, those on temporary status, farm workers, essential workers.

Revise our laws so businesses have workers they need and families don't wait decades to reunite.

It's not only the right thing to do — it's economically smart thing to do.

That's why immigration reform is supported by everyone from labor unions to religious leaders to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Let's get it done once and for all.

Folks, advancing liberty and justice also requires protecting the rights of women.

The constitutional right affirmed by Roe v. Wade — standing precedent for half a century — is under attack as never before.

If you want to go forward — not backwards — we must protect access to health care. Preserve a woman's right to choose. And continue to advance maternal health care for all Americans.

And folks, for our L.G.B.T.Q.+ Americans, let's finally get the bipartisan Equality Act to my desk. The onslaught of state laws targeting transgender Americans and their families is simply wrong.

I've said last year, especially to our younger transgender Americans, I'll always have your back as your president, so you can be yourself and reach your God-given potential.

Folks, as I've just demonstrated, while it often appears that we do not agree, and that — we do agree on a lot more things than we acknowledge. I signed 80 bipartisan bills into law last year. From preventing government shutdowns to protecting Asian Americans from still-too-common hate crimes to reforming military justice.

And we'll soon be strengthening the Violence Against Women Act that I first wrote three decades ago. It's important, it's important for us to show the nation that we can come together and do big things.

So tonight I'm offering a unity agenda for the nation. Four big things we can do together, in my view.

First, beat the opioid epidemic.

There is so much we can do. Increase funding for prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery.

Get rid of outdated rules that stop doctors from prescribing treatments. Stop the flow of illicit drugs by working with state and local law enforcement to go after the trafficker.

And if you're suffering from addiction, you know, you know you're not alone. I believe in recovery, and I celebrate the 23 million, 23 million Americans in recovery.

Second, let's take on mental health. Especially among our children, whose lives and education have been turned upside down.

The American Rescue Plan gave schools money to hire teachers and help students make up for lost learning.

I urge every parent to make sure your school, your school does just that. They have the money. We can all play a part — sign up to be a tutor or a mentor.

Children were also struggling before the pandemic. Bullying, violence, trauma and the harms of social media.

As Frances Haugen, who is here with us tonight, has shown, we must hold social media platforms accountable for the national experiment they're conducting on our children for profit.

Folks — thank you, thank you for the courage you showed. Thank you. Thank you for the courage you showed.

It's time to strengthen privacy protections, ban targeted advertising to children, demand tech companies stop collecting personal data on our children.

And let's get all Americans the mental health services they need. More people they can turn to for help, and full parity between physical and mental health care if we treat it that way in our insurance.

Look, the third piece of that agenda is support our veterans.

Veterans are the backbone and the spine of this country. They're the best of us.

I've always believed that we have a sacred obligation to equip those we send to war and care for those and their family when they come home.

My administration is providing assistance in job training and housing, and now helping lower-income veterans get V.A. care debt-free.

And our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have faced many dangers.

One being stationed at bases, breathing in toxic smoke from burn pits. Many of you have been there. I've been in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan over 40 times. These burn pits that incinerate waste, the waste of war — medical and hazardous material, jet fuel and so much more.

And they came home, many of the world's fittest and best trained warriors in the world, never the same.

Headaches. Numbness. Dizziness.

A cancer that would put them in a flag-draped coffin.

I know.

One of those soldiers was my son Maj. Beau Biden.

I don't know for sure if the burn pit that he lived near, that his hooch was near, in Iraq and earlier than that in Kosovo is the cause of his brain cancer, or the diseases of so many of our troops.

But I'm committed to find out everything we can.

Committed to military families like Danielle Robinson from Ohio.

The widow of Sgt. First Class Heath Robinson.

He was born a soldier. Army National Guard. Combat medic in Kosovo and Iraq.

Stationed near Baghdad, just yards from burn pits the size of football fields.

Danielle is here with us tonight. They loved going to Ohio State football games. And he loved building Legos with their daughter.

But cancer from prolonged exposure to burn pits ravaged Heath's lungs and body.

Danielle says Heath was a fighter to the very end.

He didn't know how to stop fighting, and neither did she.

Through her pain, she found purpose to demand that we do better.

Tonight, Danielle, we are going to do better.

The V.A. is pioneering new ways of linking toxic exposures to disease, already helping more veterans get benefits.

And tonight, I'm announcing we're expanding eligibility to veterans suffering from nine respiratory cancers.

I'm also calling on Congress to pass a law to make sure veterans devastated by toxic exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan finally get the benefits and the comprehensive health care that they deserve.

And fourth and last, let's end cancer as we know it.

This is personal — to me and to Jill and to Kamala, and so many of you. So many of you have lost someone you loved: husband, wife, son, daughter, mom, dad.

Cancer is the No. 2 cause of death in America, second only to heart disease.

Last month, I announced a plan to supercharge the "cancer moonshot" that President Obama asked me to lead six years ago.

Our goal is to cut cancer death rates by at least 50 percent over the next 25 years. I think we can do better than that. Turn cancers from death sentences into treatable diseases.

More support for patients and their families.

To get there, I call on Congress to fund what I call ARPA-H, the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health.

Patterned after DARPA and the Defense Department, projects that led in DARPA to the internet, GPS and so much more to make our forces more safer and be able to wage war with more clarity

ARPA will have a singular purpose — to drive breakthroughs in cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes and more.

A unity agenda for the nation.

We can do these things. It's within our power, and I don't see a partisan edge to any one of those four things.

My fellow Americans, tonight, we have gathered in this sacred space — the citadel of democracy.

In this Capitol, generation after generation, Americans have debated great questions amid great strife, and have done great things.

We fought for freedom, expanded liberty, debated totalitarianism and terror.

We built the strongest, freest and most prosperous nation the world has ever known.

Now is the hour.

Our moment of responsibility.

Our test of resolve and conscience, of history itself.

It is in this moment that our character of this generation is formed. Our purpose is found. Our future is forged.

Well, I know this nation.

We'll meet the test.

Protect freedom and liberty, expand fairness and opportunity.

And we will save democracy.

As hard as those times have been, I am more optimistic about America today than I've been my whole life.

Because I see the future that's within our grasp.

Because I know there is simply nothing beyond our capacity.

We are the only nation on earth that has always turned every crisis we faced into an opportunity.

The only nation that can be defined by a single word: possibilities.

So on this night, on our 245th year as a nation, I have come to report on the state of the nation — the state of the union.

And my report is this: the state of the union is strong because you, the American people, are strong.

We are stronger today than we were a year ago.

And we'll be stronger a year from now than we are today.

This is our moment to meet and overcome the challenges of our time.

And we will, as one people.

One America.

The United States of America.

	God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you. Go get 'em.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 US reliance Russian oil hits record high</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/us-reliance-russian-oil-hits-record-high-biden-pre/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/us-reliance-russian-oil-hits-record-high-biden-pre/</a>
GIST	<p>President Biden moved Tuesday to check Russian President Vladimir Putin's energy leverage, releasing strategic oil reserves as U.S. petroleum imports from Russia hit a record high and frustration mounted over the administration's domestic fossil fuel crackdown.</p> <p>The U.S. imported 245 million barrels of Russian crude oil and petroleum products last year, a surge of about 24% over 2020, according to preliminary 2021 figures released Monday by the Energy Information Administration.</p> <p>"This equates to nearly 672,000 barrels per day — an all-time record and a 79% increase from just four years ago," Martin Durbin, senior vice president for policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement.</p> <p>The increased U.S. reliance on Russian energy fed calls for Mr. Biden to loosen his grip on domestic oil and gas production, starting with lifting restrictions on federal leasing and reversing his cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline.</p> <p>"President Biden needs to stop financing Putin's war with Russian oil because he shut off the spigots of American energy," said House Minority Whip Steve Scalise, Louisiana Republican. "It's having devastating impacts on the people of Ukraine, but it's putting billions of dollars in Putin's pocket."</p> <p>Sen. Roger Marshall of Kansas introduced a bill Tuesday to ban the import of the Kremlin's petroleum products. The legislation garnered the support of at least eight other Republicans, including Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, the ranking Republican on the Energy Committee.</p> <p>"First and foremost, President Biden needs to restart America's energy production and quit funding Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine by continuing to purchase crude oil from Russia," Mr. Marshall told Fox News Digital about his bill.</p> <p>Mr. Biden on Tuesday authorized the Department of Energy to release 30 million barrels from the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve as part of a global effort to mitigate supply shocks from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"Today's announcement is another example of partners around the world condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine and working together to address the impact of President Putin's war of choice," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said. "President Biden was clear from the beginning that all tools are on the table to protect American businesses and consumers, including from rising prices at the pump."</p> <p>International Energy Agency member states undertook a broader effort by collectively releasing an initial 60 million barrels of crude oil from their respective reserves.</p> <p>Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm reiterated the administration's support for investing in clean energy as "the best way to reduce domestic and international dependence on Russian oil and gas" on the way to achieving net-zero U.S. emissions by 2050.</p> <p>"Clean energy technologies are available and cost-effective today and offer the surest path towards a world where energy supply cannot be used as a means of political coercion or a threat to national security, and where families and businesses are protected from volatile prices and markets," Ms. Granholm said.</p>

Her message came as a stiff-arm to industry and business groups that are urging the administration to fight Russian energy dominance in Europe by unleashing U.S. producers.

The Chamber's Mr. Durbin suggested several "no-brainers," starting with lifting the ban on leasing and accelerating permitting on federal land, accounting for 22% of total oil production and 12% of natural gas.

He also urged the Energy Department to approve permits for six proposed liquified natural gas terminals that have languished for months and in some cases years.

"With oil prices now pushing \$100 per barrel and Russia dependent on energy sales to fund the government's budget — including its military and the invasion of Ukraine — the leverage Russia's energy exports exert over the West is now on display for the world to see," Mr. Durbin said. "This reality is forcing urgent reconsideration of energy policies that contribute to this dependence."

U.S. imports of Russian crude oil surged after the Trump administration imposed sanctions in 2019 on Venezuela, which exports crude better suited for U.S. refineries than the light, sweet crude produced domestically, said Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance.

About 8% of U.S. imports of crude oil and refined petroleum products come from Russia, according to EIA figures.

"We actually export and import even when we were a net exporter under the Trump administration," said Ms. Sgamma. "We were still importing oil and then exporting refined product or light sweet crude to be refined elsewhere because we just don't have enough refining capacity in the United States for our light, sweet crude."

U.S. oil production fell during the pandemic as domestic and worldwide demand dropped, but Ms. Sgamma blamed the 2021 decline in part on the administration's policies.

"This administration is just hostile to this industry, so we're not producing as much as we were during the Trump administration," she said. "We're down about 1 million barrels of oil a day."

The Biden administration hit Russia with economic sanctions last week in response to the invasion of Ukraine but specifically avoided sanctioning Russian oil and gas because of concerns about disrupting world energy markets and rising fuel prices for U.S. consumers.

Even so, some Republicans called for Mr. Biden to impose energy sanctions and make up the difference with U.S. production.

Sen. Joni Ernst, Iowa Republican, urged the administration Tuesday to sanction Russian energy "right away." She said Mr. Putin "still survives off the revenue streams that are coming in through those sources."

"What we see from this administration is a focus on a deranged climate policy," she said on Fox News. "There's no other way that we can explain this, where we have cut back American energy production and have become much more reliant on Russia and other nations like Russia."

Sen. Joe Manchin III, West Virginia Democrat, called it "hypocritical" to import Russian crude while decrying the attack on Ukraine.

"While Americans decry what is happening in Ukraine, the United States continues to allow the import of more than half a million barrels per day of crude oil and other petroleum products from Russia during this time of war," Mr. Manchin said. "This makes no sense at all and represents a clear and present danger to our nation's energy security."

	<p>Mark Finley, a scholar of energy and global oil markets at the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, said Russia's political leverage lies in its role as the "biggest exporter of natural gas and second biggest exporter of oil after Saudi Arabia."</p> <p>"To me, it's not so much about U.S. dependence on Russia as it is about Russia's ability to use its position as one of the biggest exporters of oil and gas in the world for its own geopolitical leverage," said Mr. Finley. "It is an issue, but it's not an issue because the U.S. imports it. It's because the world uses it."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>02/28 Car insurance rates climbing in 2022</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/feb/28/economists-see-car-insurance-rates-climbing-2022/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/feb/28/economists-see-car-insurance-rates-climbing-2022/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Masks are coming off, COVID-19 restrictions are coming down and motorists are hitting the road — and they're running straight into higher car insurance rates that show no sign of declining this year, economists say.</p> <p>Pent-up demand for new and used cars after a year of pandemic-reduced driving is boosting risks for auto insurers, who pass the costs of those risks to consumers regardless of accident and claims records.</p> <p>Automobile insurers generally increase their annual rates by 3% each year, but studies from Insurify and S&amp;P Global Market Intelligence show they rose 12% last year. Insurify predicts a 5% increase this year.</p> <p>"The U.S. auto insurance industry had an underwriting profit in 2020 for the first time in a decade, as drivers stayed off the roads due to the pandemic," said Hans Dau, founder of Mitchell Madison Group, a business consulting firm. "Now, high general inflation and ever-higher increases in used and new car prices clearly drive up claims costs for insurers, given that claims frequencies and severities are returning to normal."</p> <p>Mr. Dau said an expected interest rate hike in March, which will cause losses in property and casualty insurers' \$2 trillion bond portfolios, is also "an important contributing factor to higher premiums."</p> <p>"P&amp;C insurers have three times more invested assets than premium revenue, as they typically break even on underwriting and make all their profit on invested premiums," Mr. Dau said.</p> <p>Brian Marks, who teaches economics at the University of New Haven, said supply chain factors in the rate hikes include increased costs of computer chips, parts and labor, which all remain in short supply. This pressures car dealers to sell new vehicles above their Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price, he said.</p> <p>"Delays in repairs also mean, if applicable, the need for rental cars, which has also experienced rising prices," Mr. Marks said.</p> <p>Scott Holeman, a media relations director for the Insurance Information Institute, an industry group known as Triple-I, said what feels like steep increases means the rates are returning to normal.</p> <p>"While some recent news reports might give the impression that auto insurance rates are soaring, they are actually returning to pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2022," Mr. Holeman said. "Auto insurers gave back approximately \$14 billion to policyholders at the beginning of the pandemic, as they anticipated fewer accidents during the economic lockdown."</p> <p>He also cited Triple-I reports that collision frequency rose 42%, collision severity rose 43%, the fatality rate rose 26% and replacement parts costs rose 13% during the third quarter of 2021.</p> <p>"We're witnessing a rapid rise in accident frequency and severity," Mr. Holeman said. "These factors, combined with supply chain issues, have driven insurers' auto losses to above pre-pandemic levels."</p>



Other industry research confirms that fewer Americans drove in 2020, decreasing accidents and keeping rates the same or lower than in previous years.

Rates rose again in 2021 as many drivers returned to the road from pandemic lockdowns.

S&P Global Market Intelligence reported last month that car insurance rates increased in November from 3% to 12% across multiple companies.

In March, April and May 2021, Insurify reported that Americans drove 32% more miles than during the same period in the previous spring, although mileage did not return to 2019 levels.

“While the fatality rate decreased by 3% between spring 2020 and 2021, it remained 26% higher in 2021 than it was during the same period in 2019, suggesting that reckless driving habits adopted during initial pandemic shelter-in-place orders have endured well beyond the onset of the pandemic,” Insurify said in the report.

Christine McDaniel, a senior fellow at George Mason University’s Mercatus Center free market think tank, said the Insurify study confirms that premiums for private passenger car insurance have been rising since last spring after briefly declining for some drivers in December 2020.

“More people are driving under the influence, and road rage incidents are also increasing,” Ms. McDaniel said. “Road rage deaths and injuries doubled in 2021 compared to 2019. That means that insurance companies are shelling out more and more for each claim.”

Ms. McDaniel, a former Treasury Department assistant deputy secretary, said the supply chain issues and inflated prices show no signs of letting up.

“Auto parts are more expensive, and they take longer to get,” Ms. McDaniel said. “So instead of an insurance company paying for your rental car for one to three days, now it can take weeks for that bumper, windshield, or new camera or electronic part to come in.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Pentagon: lack fuel, food hinders Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/lack-fuel-and-food-hinders-russian-advance-kyiv-pe/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/lack-fuel-and-food-hinders-russian-advance-kyiv-pe/</a>
GIST	<p>Russia can sell its fuel in markets around the world but apparently cannot supply the tanks President Vladimir Putin sent into neighboring Ukraine as part of an invasion now nearly a week old. On Tuesday, Pentagon officials said a massive Russian armored column has been bogged down on its advance to Kyiv in part because of lack of supplies.</p> <p>A senior Defense Department official said the Russian column has faced greater resistance than it expected and not just from a vigorous Ukrainian resistance.</p> <p>“What we’re seeing are columns that are literally out of gas and now they’re starting to run out of food for their troops,” the official told reporters at the Pentagon. “We’re only on Day 6” of the invasion.</p> <p>Russia’s troops in Ukraine are primarily conscripts pressed into military service and Pentagon officials said they have seen signs that morale in some of the units is low.</p> <p>“Not all of them are fully-trained or prepared, or even aware that they were going to be sent into a combat operation,” the senior Defense Department official said in a background briefing. “We do have indications that some [Russian] units have surrendered without a fight.”</p> <p>But Pentagon officials added that the Russians will likely learn from their mistakes on the battlefield going forward.</p>

	<p>“They will regroup, they will adjust, and they will change their tactics,” the Defense Department officials said.</p> <p>There were growing signs Tuesday that Mr. Putin’s invasion was backfiring badly on at least one account, uniting the European Union and the sometimes fractious members of NATO against Russia and in support of neighboring Ukraine.</p> <p>“We have witnessed a fundamental change of policies across the democratic world,” Prime Minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia said Tuesday during a visit to a local military base by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. “We need to continue our urgent support to Ukraine. We cannot stop until we have stopped Putin.”</p> <p>Mr. Johnson said on a visit to the region Tuesday that Mr. Putin made a “disastrous miscalculation” when he ordered the invasion. “The Ukrainians have mounted an astonishing and tenacious resistance,” he said.</p> <p>Since the invasion, NATO has rapidly increased its military presence in eastern Europe to deter Russian aggression against members of the alliance, including sending 100 jet fighters on high alert and 120 ships on naval patrols from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, Mr. Stoltenberg said.</p> <p>“We will protect and defend every inch of NATO territory,” he said. “NATO is a defensive alliance. We do not seek conflict with Russia.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Oil prices surge despite reserve release</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/oil-prices-surge-release-reserves-fails-calm-marke/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/oil-prices-surge-release-reserves-fails-calm-marke/</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — Oil prices surged another \$5 per barrel on Wednesday after an agreement by the United States and other major governments to release supplies from strategic stockpiles failed to calm market anxiety over <a href="#">Russia</a>’s attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>Benchmark U.S. crude rose \$5.24 per barrel to \$108.60 in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange.</p> <p>Brent crude, the international price standard, gained \$5.43 to \$110.40 per barrel in London.</p> <p>The 31 members of the International Energy Agency, the club of major oil consumers, agreed Tuesday to release 60 million barrels of crude from stockpiles in hopes of calming markets.</p> <p>That failed to calm concern about disruption in supplies from <a href="#">Russia</a>, the second-biggest exporter behind Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>“Markets dismissed the notion that 60 million barrels of strategic reserves released will be consequential to the risks of Russian supply jeopardized,” Tan Boon Heng of Mizuho Bank said in a report. “<a href="#">Russia</a> pumps more than that in just six days.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 IMF, World Bank condemn Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/imf-world-bank-condemn-invasion-prepare-emergency-/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/imf-world-bank-condemn-invasion-prepare-emergency-/</a>
GIST	<p>The world’s two biggest international financial bodies have condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and announced a multibillion-dollar emergency financing package for the beleaguered Ukrainian government.</p> <p>The heads of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund issued a joint statement Tuesday afternoon announcing the measures.</p> <p>The statement did not mention Russia by name, but said the two bodies were also assessing whether new aid and support will be needed for countries in the region affected by the fighting.</p>

“We are deeply shocked and saddened by the devastating human and economic toll brought by the war in Ukraine,” World Bank President David Malpass and IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said in the statement.

“People are being killed, injured and forced to flee, and massive damage is caused to the country’s physical infrastructure. We stand with the Ukrainian people through these horrifying developments,” they added.

The two said their institutions have been in daily contact with Ukrainian authorities since the fighting began last week.

The IMF said its board would take up as early as next week a request from Kyiv for an emergency financing package and aims to complete a larger financing agreement worth \$2.2 billion by the end of June.

The World Bank said it is preparing a separate \$3 billion package of support for Ukraine, including an emergency provision of at least \$350 million that could be approved this week.

The joint statement noted there have been “significant spillovers” to other countries from the war, including rising commodity and energy prices and disruptions in financial markets.

The World Bank and IMF “are also working together to assess the economic and financial impact of the conflict and refugees on other countries in the region and the world,” the joint statement said. “We stand ready to provide enhanced policy, technical and financial support to neighboring countries as needed.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 FEMA coronavirus aid to states thru July 1</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/biden-extends-fema-coronavirus-aid-for-states-thro/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/1/biden-extends-fema-coronavirus-aid-for-states-thro/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden is extending the federal government’s 100% reimbursement of COVID-19 emergency response costs to states, tribes and territories through July 1, the White House announced Tuesday.</p> <p>White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients informed governors on a conference call that Biden is approving the extension of Federal Emergency Management Agency support to help continue FEMA-backed efforts like vaccination clinics, mass testing sites and surging hospital resources to deal with local case spikes.</p> <p>“FEMA’s priority throughout the response to COVID-19 has been to coordinate and provide the necessary resources and personnel states, tribes and territories need to adequately respond to the pandemic,” FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said. “Today’s extension of the 100% cost-share through July 1, 2022, builds on our efforts to assist impacted communities across state and federal levels.”</p> <p>The extension through the first half of the year is a sign that the White House continues to see a need for federal resources in combating COVID-19 even as Biden tries to guide the country to live with the coronavirus while case counts recede.</p> <p>Recent examples of FEMA funding include \$1.2 million given to Ball State University in Indiana last month to cover on-campus testing and \$91.8 million to Wisconsin to reimburse for COVID-19 testing costs and surge staffing in treatment centers.</p> <p>Biden, a Democrat, first signed an order directing FEMA to cover 100% of state emergency costs related to the coronavirus on his second day in office through September 2021. He subsequently extended it to the end of 2021 and again through April 1.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Bombardment Ukraine cities intensifies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/ukraine-cities-bombardment-russia-attack-kyiv-kharkiv-russian-war-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/ukraine-cities-bombardment-russia-attack-kyiv-kharkiv-russian-war-invasion</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine's besieged cities have come under more heavy bombardment after Russian commanders facing fierce resistance intensified their shelling of urban areas.</p> <p>As US president Joe Biden warned Vladimir Putin that he would "pay a price" for his aggression, the <a href="#">Russia</a> leader's forces have shown no sign of stopping an assault that has included strikes on the capital Kyiv and rocket attacks in the second city of Kharkiv, resulting in the deaths of dozens of people.</p> <p>Ukrainian security chiefs said on Wednesday morning that Russian paratroopers had landed in Kharkiv and engaged in heavy fighting with Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>At least 21 people have been killed and 112 wounded in shelling in Ukraine's second most populous city, the regional governor has said.</p> <p>Heavy fighting was also reported in Kherson, a city on the Black Sea in southern Ukraine, where the mayor said Russian forces had taken control of the railway station and the port by the early hours of Wednesday. There were also reports that the strategically important Sea of Azov port city, Mariupol, was surrounded by Russian troops.</p> <p>In a ringing attack on Putin in his State of the Union address on Tuesday night, Biden told the massed members of US Congress in Washington that the invasion of Ukraine had left Russia "weaker, and the rest of the world stronger."</p> <p>"Throughout our history we've learned this lesson – when dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos. They keep moving. And, the costs and threats to America and the world keep rising.</p> <p>"Putin has unleashed violence and chaos. But while he may make gains on the battlefield – he will pay a continuing high price over the long run."</p> <p>Biden <a href="#">announced he was banning Russian flights from US airspace</a> from Wednesday. Ukraine's ambassador to the US <a href="#">got a standing ovation</a> at the start of the address, as Biden called on the House to show the world that the United States of America stands with Ukraine.</p> <p>Facing emboldened Ukrainian troops bolstered by citizen soldiers, Russia has failed to capture a single city since its full-scale invasion began nearly a week ago. Western analysts say Russia has resorted to the bombing of built-up areas before entering them. Moscow's strategy in Chechnya and Syria was to use artillery and air bombardments to pulverize cities and crush fighters' resolve.</p> <p>In other developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have fled the fighting as a miles-long Russian military convoy north of Kyiv advances toward the city.</li> <li>• West of Kyiv, in the city of Zhytomyr, four people, including a child, were killed on Tuesday by a Russian cruise missile, a Ukrainian official said.</li> <li>• A Russian military strike in the small town of Borodjanka north-west of Kyiv on Tuesday night tore through two apartment blocks, videos on social media and confirmed by multiple news sources show.</li> <li>• The United Nations General Assembly was set to reprimand Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and demand that Moscow stop fighting and withdraw its military forces, a move that aims to diplomatically isolate Russia at the world body.</li> <li>• Despite the buildup of forces outside the capital, a US defence official said on Tuesday night that Russia's move on Kyiv had stalled as its forces struggle with basic logistics challenges, including shortages of food and fuel. Some units appeared to be gripped by low morale, the official said.</li> </ul>

- In addition, commanders may be considering more bombardment instead of using the kind of armoured thrusts that characterised the first few days of the war, a US military thinktank said on Tuesday.

Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said on Tuesday that the Kremlin was preparing to cut off a large part of Ukraine from the internet and communications in an effort to break local resistance.

In a highly emotional address to the European parliament on Tuesday that was greeted with a standing ovation, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said at least 16 children had been killed on Monday and mocked Russia's claim that it was going after only military targets. "Where are these children, what kind of military factories do they work at? What tanks are they going at, launching cruise missiles?"

"We resist the invasive aggression," Zelenskiy wrote on Twitter late on Tuesday, after thanking western leaders for their support. "Today, more than ever, it is important for us to feel that we are not alone."

The United Nations says at least 136 civilians have been killed in the invasion, but that the real number of people is likely much higher.

The Russian drive to force a Ukrainian capitulation coincides with a second round of negotiations between Russian and Ukrainian officials, scheduled for Wednesday. The first round, held on the Belarus border, yielded no positive results.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has drawn global condemnation for ordering the invasion of Ukraine last Thursday, but the west has responded with sanctions that have sent the rouble to historic lows and raised the prospect of a severe recession in Russia.

The sanctions are designed to shut off Russia's economy from the global financial system, pushing international companies to halt sales, cut ties, and dump tens of billions of dollars' worth of investments.

The sanctions have had an immediate impact on Russia's economy, with queues forming outside banks as Russians rush to salvage their savings.

Apple, Exxon, Ford, Nike, Boeing and Jaguar Land Rover have joined the list of multinational companies that suspended sales of their products or other operations in Russia in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine, which is not a member of Nato, has called on the western military alliance to implement a no-fly zone – a request rejected by Washington, which fears stoking a direct conflict between the world's two biggest nuclear powers.

The US, Germany, Sweden and other countries have instead sent weapons to Kyiv, and treasury secretary Janet Yellen said the United States had agreed with partners to convene a taskforce "to freeze and seize the assets of key Russian elites".

The move "will inflict financial pain on the powerful individuals surrounding Putin and make clear that no one is beyond our collective reach," Yellen said in a statement following a Tuesday call with Group of Seven officials.

The IMF and the World Bank condemned the Russian action in Ukraine and the "horrific" suffering of people there, and pledged a \$3bn package of support for the country in a [strongly worded joint statement](#).

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HEADLINE	03/02 Possible Russia war crimes in Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/researchers-gather-evidence-of-possible-russian-war-crimes-in-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/researchers-gather-evidence-of-possible-russian-war-crimes-in-ukraine</a>
GIST	Six days after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, there is mounting <a href="#">evidence that its military is committing war crimes</a> with deadly attacks on civilians and the use of cluster munitions.

Eliot Higgins, the founder of the investigative journalism site Bellingcat, said there was evidence of [Russia](#) causing “civilian harm”, including through the use of “cluster bombs in civilian areas”, from credible video and stills of the conflict.

Footage of an attack on a [car park in Kharkiv on Monday](#), described by a Bellingcat researcher as a cluster bomb strike, shows residents walking in a nearby park just as the sequence of bombs go off. The area appears to be residential.

Dashcam footage, [assessed by Russia’s Conflict Intelligence Team](#) to have been shot in Kharkiv, is thought to show a cluster bomb landing in a road last Friday. The driver makes a hasty U-turn as explosions rain around the car. Given the lack of aircraft noise, the bomb was probably fired by a Russian Grad rocket system, the researchers conclude.

Cluster munitions, which indiscriminately scatter small bombs over a wide area, are banned by more than 100 states including the UK, France and Germany because of their lack of precision. But neither Russia nor [Ukraine](#) (or the US) have signed up to a treaty first introduced in 2008 that bans them.

Further evidence of the use of cluster munitions has emerged, including the remains of a rocket motor from a BMP-30 Russian cluster munition [found in road in Kharkiv](#) on Friday, and video of a similar bomb part landing [in Bucha](#), north-west of Kyiv.

Several NGOs have focused on an attack on a kindergarten in Okhtyrka, about 60 miles west of Kharkiv, on Friday, the second day of all-out fighting. Drone footage taken in the aftermath shows multiple blackened explosion spots, and [dead or severely injured people by the entrance](#).

Three civilians were killed, including a child, said Amnesty International. “There is no possible justification for dropping cluster munitions in populated areas, let alone near a school,” said Agnès Callamard, the secretary general of Amnesty International.

Intentionally targeting civilians or civilian buildings is considered a war crime under international humanitarian law, as are attacks on military targets that cause excessive civilian casualties, [according to the United Nations](#). Russia routinely denies it engages in illegal attacks.

Roos Boer, a project leader with the Pax peace project in the Netherlands, said: “If you are in doubt whether a target is military or not, you should presume it is civilian. An indiscriminate attack therefore is unlawful.”

Video evidence suggests Russian missile strikes on the eastern city of Kharkiv were launched with little regard for the impact on civilians. A [missile strike](#) on Tuesday – possibly a [Kalibr cruise missile](#) – on the regional government building in the centre of Kharkiv was filmed as it happened.

At least 10 civilians were killed in the morning attack in the heart of the industrial city of more than 1 million people. Hours later, Russia said it would engage in what it called “high-precision” strikes on official buildings in Kyiv.

On Monday [videos](#) showed serial explosions from multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) on other buildings in Kharkiv. One showed the [distinctive 13-storey Diamond City tower](#) clearly visible in the foreground. [Bomb fragments were seen in roads](#) in Kharkiv and [rocket parts in apartments](#) and dead civilians on the streets on a day where at least nine were killed.

But despite concerns raised by western intelligence, clear evidence is yet to emerge of Russian forces using [destructive thermobaric weapons](#) (although Ukraine has claimed [capture of a TOS-1A flamethrower](#)) or cluster incendiary bombs of the type that its forces were accused of using in Syria [during the siege of Aleppo](#).



	<p>On Monday night one western official said there was “a requirement to record and capture” attacks on civilians, while another said: “I think we will be very attentive and alert to war crimes or breaches of international humanitarian law in this conflict.”</p> <p>But while governments talk about acting, researchers are already playing their part. Higgins said that unlike in other recent conflicts – such as the war in Syria – “an open-source intelligence community” collecting and studying video and photo evidence had emerged “from day one”.</p> <p>Aided by the willingness of Ukrainians and others to document the conflict on their phones, independent researchers such as Bellingcat have been able to quickly geolocate and document evidence that could be useful in the future.</p> <p>Bellingcat has also set up a partnership with Mnemonic, an NGO dedicated to archiving evidence collected from social media and mobile phones, which aims to secure material to the standard of evidence. “The day may come when all this ends up at the international criminal court,” Higgins said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 China willing to mediate in the conflict?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/china-mediate-ukraine-russia-war">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/china-mediate-ukraine-russia-war</a>
GIST	<p>China has signalled its willingness to play a mediator role in the conflict between Russia and <a href="#">Ukraine</a> as the war entered its sixth day.</p> <p>In his first phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, since the outbreak of the war, China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, said on Tuesday that Beijing “laments” the outbreak of the conflict and is “extremely concerned” about the harm to civilians, according to a Chinese readout.</p> <p><a href="#">State-owned China Central Television</a> said Kuleba asked China to use its influence to help mediate in its conflict with Russia. It added that Kuleba “asked for help in finding a diplomatic solution”.</p> <p>The Chinese foreign ministry said the call was initiated by the Ukrainian side. The two foreign ministers also discussed evacuation of Chinese nationals from Ukraine, with 6,000 Chinese citizens living, working and studying there, according to official figures.</p> <p>“Ukraine is willing to strengthen communications with China, and it looks forward to China playing a mediation role in achieving a ceasefire,” <a href="#">according to a Chinese readout</a>, which cited Kuleba.</p> <p>Wang’s call with Kuleba came amid escalation of the conflict. On Tuesday, Russian forces bombarded the regional government building in Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second city, killing at least 10 civilians, according to official accounts.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a huge armoured column rolled towards the capital, Kyiv, raising fears Russia may resort to pulverising civilian areas. Kuleba tweeted a video of the huge explosion in Kharkiv’s Freedom Square, calling it a “barbaric missile strike” resulting from Vladimir Putin’s inability to “break Ukraine down”.</p> <p>Western allies continue to show solidarity with Ukraine, piling pressure on Russia through sanctions and military assistance. China, however, said it “fiercely” opposes sanctions against Russia. It said dialogue “is the only way to stop the fighting”.</p> <p>China has been watching the events closely. On Tuesday, Wang continued to take a balanced view on Russia’s action against its neighbour.</p> <p>He said while China believed the security of one country “should not come at the expense of the security of other countries”, regional security “cannot be realised through the expansion of military blocs”.</p>



	<p>Wang told Kuleba the pressing task for now was “to ease the situation as much as possible to prevent the conflict from escalating or even getting out of control”. He also urged Ukraine to “assume corresponding international responsibilities”.</p> <p>“China is trying to juggle a balanced position to support Russia’s ‘reasonable concerns’ and at the same time not to burn all the bridges,” said Yun Sun, the director of the east Asia programme at the Stimson Centre in Washington.</p> <p>“[Beijing] will not give the world the satisfaction of opposing Russia. Putin knew it. Whatever Russia does, the US still looms large as the biggest threat to China. For that alone, China will not oppose Russia.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Russia troop deaths expose weakness</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/politics/russia-ukraine-war-deaths.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/politics/russia-ukraine-war-deaths.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — When Russia seized Crimea in 2014, President Vladimir V. Putin was so worried about Russian casualty figures coming to light that authorities accosted journalists who tried to cover funerals of some of the 400 troops killed during that one-month campaign.</p> <p>But Moscow may be losing that many soldiers daily in Mr. Putin’s latest invasion of Ukraine, American and European officials said. The mounting toll for Russian troops exposes a potential weakness for the Russian president at a time when he is still claiming, publicly, that he is engaged only in a limited military operation in Ukraine’s separatist east.</p> <p>No one can say with certainty just how many Russian troops have died since last Thursday, when they began what is turning into a long march to Kyiv, the capital. Some Russian units have put down their arms and refused to fight, the Pentagon said Tuesday. Major Ukrainian cities have withstood the onslaught thus far.</p> <p>American officials had expected the northeastern <a href="#">city of Kharkiv</a> to fall in a day, for example, but Ukrainian troops there have fought back and regained control despite furious rocket fire. The bodies of Russian soldiers have been left in areas surrounding Kharkiv. Videos and photos on social media show <a href="#">charred remains of tanks and armored vehicles</a>, their crews dead or wounded.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, acknowledged on Sunday for the first time that “there are dead and wounded” Russian troops but offered no numbers. He insisted Ukrainian losses were “many times” higher. Ukraine has said its forces have killed more than 5,300 Russian troops.</p> <p>Neither side’s claims have been independently verified, and Biden administration officials have refused to discuss casualty figures publicly. But one American official put the Russian losses as of Monday at 2,000, an estimate with which two European officials concurred.</p> <p>Senior Pentagon officials told lawmakers in closed briefings on Monday that Russian and Ukrainian military deaths appeared to be the same, at around 1,500 on each side in the first five days, congressional officials said. But they cautioned that the figures — based on satellite imagery, communication intercepts, social media and on-the-ground media reports — were estimates.</p> <p>For a comparison, nearly 2,500 American troops were killed in Afghanistan over 20 years of war.</p> <p>For Mr. Putin, the rising death toll could damage any remaining domestic support for his Ukrainian endeavors. Russian memories are long — and mothers of soldiers, in particular, American officials say, could easily hark back to the 15,000 troops killed when the Soviet Union invaded and occupied Afghanistan, or the thousands killed in Chechnya.</p> <p>Russia has deployed field hospitals near the front lines, say military analysts, who have also monitored ambulances driving back and forth from Russian units to hospitals in neighboring Belarus, Moscow’s ally.</p>

“Given the many reports of over 4,000 Russians killed in action, it is clear that something dramatic is happening,” said Adm. James G. Stavridis, who was NATO’s supreme allied commander before his retirement. “If Russian losses are this significant, Vladimir Putin is going to have some difficult explaining to do on his home front.”

Representative Adam B. Schiff, Democrat of California and the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, added, “There are going to be a lot of Russians going home in body bags and a lot of Russian families grieving the longer this goes on.”

In particular, Pentagon officials and military analysts said it was surprising that Russian soldiers had left behind the bodies of their comrades.

“It’s been shocking to see that they’re leaving their fallen brethren behind on the battlefield,” said Evelyn Farkas, the top Pentagon official for Russia and Ukraine during the Obama administration. “Eventually the moms will be like, ‘Where’s Yuri? Where’s Maksim?’”

Already, the Ukrainian government has begun answering that question. On Sunday, authorities launched a website that they said was meant to help Russian families track down information about soldiers who may have been killed or captured. The site, which states it was created by Ukraine’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, says it is providing videos of captured Russian soldiers, some of them injured. The pictures and videos change throughout the day.

“If your relatives or friends are in Ukraine and participate in the war against our people — here you can get information about their fate,” the site says.

The name of the site, [www.200rf.com](http://www.200rf.com), is a grim reference to Cargo 200, a military code word that was used by the Soviet Union to refer to the bodies of soldiers put in zinc-lined coffins for transport away from the battlefield; it is a euphemism for troops killed in war.

The website is part of a campaign launched by Ukraine and the West to counter what American officials characterize as Russian disinformation, which includes Russia’s insistence before the invasion that the troops surrounding Ukraine were simply there for military exercises. Information and the battle for public opinion around the world have come to play an outsize part in a war that has come to seem like a David vs. Goliath contest.

On Monday, Ukraine’s ambassador to the United Nations, [Sergiy Kyslytsya](#), read out before the General Assembly what he said were the final text messages from a Russian soldier to his mother. They were obtained, he said, by Ukrainian forces after the soldier was killed. “We were told that they would welcome us and they are falling under our armored vehicles, throwing themselves under the wheels and not allowing us to pass,” he wrote, according to Mr. Kyslytsya. “They call us fascists. Mama, this is so hard.”

The decision to read those texts, Russia experts and Pentagon officials said, was a not-so-veiled reminder to Mr. Putin of the role Russian mothers have had in bringing attention to military losses that the government tried to keep secret. In fact, a group now called the Union of Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers of Russia played a pivotal part in opening up the military to public scrutiny and in influencing perceptions of military service, Julie Elkner, a Russia historian, [wrote](#) in The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies.

On Tuesday, a senior Pentagon official said entire Russian units have laid down their arms without a fight after confronting surprisingly stiff Ukrainian defense. In some cases, Russian troops have punched holes in their vehicles’ gas tanks, presumably to avoid combat, the official said.

The Pentagon official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the operational developments, declined to say how the military had made these assessments — presumably from a mosaic of intelligence

	<p>including statements from captured Russian soldiers and communications intercepts — or how widespread these setbacks might be across the sprawling battlefield.</p> <p>Images of body bags or coffins, or soldiers killed and left on the battlefield, a Biden administration official said, would prove the most damaging to Mr. Putin at home.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials are using the reports and images on social media of Russian casualties to try to undercut the morale of the invading Russian forces.</p> <p>On Monday, Ukraine’s defense minister, Oleksiy Reznikov, offered Russian soldiers cash and amnesty if they surrendered.</p> <p>“Russian soldier! You were brought to our land to kill and die,” he said. “Do not follow criminal orders. We guarantee you a full amnesty and 5 million rubles if you lay down your arms. For those who continue to behave like an occupier, there will be no mercy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Western oil companies leaving Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/business/russia-exxon.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/business/russia-exxon.html</a>
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — Exxon Mobil said Tuesday that it would end its involvement in a large oil and natural gas project in Russia, becoming the latest Western oil company to announce that it is leaving the country after Russia invaded Ukraine.</p> <p>Exxon has been developing three oil and gas fields near the eastern Russian island of Sakhalin in partnership with Rosneft, the state-controlled energy company, and one company each from Japan and India. Exxon operates the fields and owns 30 percent of the project, which generates about 2 percent of the company’s global production.</p> <p>The Texas-based company has operated in Russia for a quarter-century, but began to unwind operations there after Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, a part of Ukraine, in 2014, triggering Western sanctions.</p> <p>BP and Shell announced plans to sell their much larger Russian investments on Sunday and Monday. TotalEnergies of France said on Tuesday that it would not invest more money in Russia but intended to keep its existing operations and investments in the country.</p> <p>The decisions by Exxon, BP and Shell end an era that began with the mass entry of Western companies into Russia at the end of the Cold War. The businesses once hoped the country, which has some of the world’s largest reserves of oil, natural gas and other commodities, would become a promising emerging market. But President Vladimir V. Putin’s autocratic policies and his invasion of Ukraine have made Russia a pariah to the international business community.</p> <p>Among major international oil companies, Equinor of Norway still produces a relatively modest 30,000 barrels of oil a day in Russia and said on Monday that it planned to leave, too. A few other companies own stakes in oil and gas pipelines.</p> <p>“Exxon Mobil supports the people of Ukraine as they seek to defend their freedom and determine their own future,” the company said in a statement. “In response to recent events, we are beginning the process to discontinue operations and developing steps to exit the Sakhalin-1 venture.”</p> <p>The company said it would not make any new investments in Russia, although it will not leave the country immediately.</p> <p>“As operator of Sakhalin-1, we have an obligation to ensure the safety of people, protection of the environment and integrity of operations,” the company said. “Our role as operator goes beyond an equity</p>

	investment. The process to discontinue operations will need to be carefully managed and closely coordinated with the co-venturers in order to ensure it is executed safely.”
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Stocks fall; turmoil financial markets</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout</a> <a href="#">link back to briefing#stocks-are-slumping-as-financial-penalties-squeeze-russia</a>
GIST	<p>Turmoil in financial markets continued on Tuesday as financial pressure on Russia escalated and its troops advanced on the Ukrainian <a href="#">capital Kyiv</a>.</p> <p>Stocks dropped and investors flocked to government bonds. Oil prices surged, approaching \$108 a barrel at one point, even as the <a href="#">International Energy Agency</a> said that member countries had agreed to release 60 million barrels of crude from their emergency reserves.</p> <p>The S&amp;P 500 fell 1.6 percent on Tuesday, while the Stoxx Europe 600 fell 2.4 percent and the DAX index in Germany lost 3.9 percent.</p> <p>Stock markets in Europe and the United States have suffered back-to-back monthly declines to start the year, the first such stretch of losses since October 2020. The Stoxx Europe 600 and the S&amp;P 500 are both down more than 9 percent so far this year.</p> <p>While Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the largest mobilization of forces in Europe since 1945, has raised alarms around the world. The human cost of the invasion is already mounting with <a href="#">more than half a million Ukrainians fleeing</a> the country and <a href="#">hundreds killed or injured</a>.</p> <p>For investors, the concern is that the crisis will ripple into the global economy, most obviously as it leads to a spike in energy costs. Fears of persistent inflation were already looming on markets as the Federal Reserve has been preparing to pull back on its economic support in an effort to tame rising prices.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, gained more than 7 percent, to about \$105 a barrel.</p> <p>Natural gas prices in Europe are also surging, and in the United States the spike in oil prices means that “retail gasoline prices could hit \$4 per gallon soon,” reads a note from Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics. As more households spend additional money filling up at the pump, “that will leave less to spend on other goods and services,” said Mr. Hunter.</p> <p>The latest stretch of losses has come as the financial penalties on Russia, imposed in the days since its invasion of Ukraine last week, have mounted. The measures vary widely — from a freeze on assets of the Russian central bank and sovereign wealth fund, to the cancellation of new movie releases there by <a href="#">The Walt Disney Company and Warner Bros</a>.</p> <p>Some individual companies are backing away from Russia to comply with sanctions. Mastercard has “blocked multiple financial institutions” from its payment network as a result of sanction orders, the company’s chief executive said in a statement late Monday.</p> <p>A number of energy companies, including <a href="#">TotalEnergies</a>, <a href="#">BP</a> and <a href="#">Shell</a>, have said they will pull away from their oil ventures with the country.</p> <p>The yield on 10-year Treasury notes fell about 10 basis points, to 1.73 percent. Yields have swung wildly in recent days, climbing as high as 2.01 percent, before tumbling again as investors sought the relative safety of government bonds.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Nord Stream 2 owner files for bankruptcy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#nord-stream-2-owner-files-for-bankruptcy-after-german-and-us-sanctions">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#nord-stream-2-owner-files-for-bankruptcy-after-german-and-us-sanctions</a>
GIST	<p>The German subsidiary of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which was built to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany, has ceased operations, a spokesman said Tuesday, a week after Germany's government mothballed the \$11 billion undersea link over Russia's attack on Ukraine.</p> <p>The pipeline's operator, Nord Stream 2 AG, is owned by Gazprom, Russia's natural gas company, but based in Switzerland, where a government official told local television that all of the 106 employees at Nord Stream 2's headquarters had also been dismissed.</p> <p>"We were informed today that the company cannot continue," Silvia Thalmann-Gut, a councilor responsible for the economy in Zug, Switzerland, told the Swiss broadcaster SFR. "It has filed for bankruptcy."</p> <p>The pipeline was an early target for sanctions against Russia last week. Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany <a href="#">announced the suspension of the project</a> within hours of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia ordering troops into eastern Ukraine — a notable shift given Mr. Scholz's prior hesitance to weigh in on what he called a strictly "private-sector project."</p> <p>The next day, President Biden <a href="#">imposed economic sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG</a>, calling the move a piece of the White House's "initial tranche of sanctions in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine."</p> <p>Germany's allies had <a href="#">long been wary of the pipeline</a> — the construction of which began under Mr. Scholz's predecessor, Angela Merkel — because of its potential to hand Mr. Putin another easy lever of power over Europe.</p> <p>As Russian escalated its tensions with Ukraine in February, leadership in Germany began to more seriously consider diversifying its gas supply and gaining more <a href="#">independence from Russian gas pipelines</a>, even as the country faced its <a href="#">worst energy crunch in decades</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Ukraine gets \$22M in crypto donations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#ukraine-crypto-donations">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/business/stock-market-news-russia-ukraine?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#ukraine-crypto-donations</a>
GIST	<p>As Russia's invasion escalated over the weekend, Ukrainian officials made an unusual request on Twitter: Send us your crypto.</p> <p>A series of tweets, sent from <a href="#">government accounts</a>, listed online wallet addresses for Bitcoin, Ether and Tether, three of the most popular cryptocurrencies. Since then, cryptocurrency investors have donated more than \$22 million worth of digital assets to the Ukrainian government and a nonprofit supporting the country's military, according to data provided by the blockchain tracking firm <a href="#">Elliptic</a> on Monday evening.</p> <p>The conflict in Ukraine has put the growing cryptocurrency industry under new scrutiny, with <a href="#">politicians</a> and regulators expressing concern that the digital tokens could become <a href="#">a tool for sanctions evasion</a> by Russian businesses and government officials. But cryptocurrency has also provided a way for investors around the world to quickly move funds to Ukrainian fighters, as more traditional crowdfunding strategies encounter obstacles.</p>

Last week, the crowdfunding website Patreon [took down a page](#) operated by Come Back Alive, a Kyiv organization that has raised money to arm and train military personnel in Ukraine. Patreon said the page had violated its rules against funding military activity.

But Come Back Alive now has a new source of funding: a crypto collective called [UkraineDAO](#), which was formed last week by crypto enthusiasts working with the Russian protest band Pussy Riot. A spokeswoman for UkraineDAO said it had raised more than \$4 million in cryptocurrency for Come Back Alive.

Nadya Tolokonnikova, a member of the band, said in an interview that Come Back Alive had agreed to spend the funds on medical support for victims of the war, rather than arming soldiers.

“Blockchain allows us to scale our efforts in a way that wasn’t possible for us before,” Ms. Tolokonnikova said, referring to the decentralized ledger system that underlies cryptocurrencies. “The old ways of raising money sometimes are really slow and just clumsy.”

Come Back Alive did not immediately respond to a request for comment. According to Elliptic, the Ukrainian group had raised more than \$7 million in cryptocurrency as of Monday evening. The government of Ukraine had received \$15.4 million in cryptocurrency contributions, Elliptic said.

The donations are a drop in the bucket in the context of the conflict. Last year, Ukraine’s defense budget was about [\\$4 billion](#); Russia spends [more than 10 times](#) that much on its military.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Europe’s fastest migration in decades</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/ukraine-war-migration.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/ukraine-war-migration.html</a>
GIST	<p>ON THE UKRAINIAN-MOLDOVAN BORDER — The war in Ukraine has set off the fastest mass migration in Europe in at least three decades, prompting comparisons with the Balkan wars of the 1990s and providing echoes of the vast population displacement that followed World War II.</p> <p>At least 660,000 people, most of them women and children, fled Ukraine for neighboring countries to the west in the first five days of Russia’s invasion, according to the United Nations refugee agency, which collated statistics recorded by national immigration authorities. And that figure does not include those displaced within Ukraine, or who fled or were ordered to evacuate to Russia.</p> <p>In less than a week, the flight of Ukrainians is at least 10 times as high as the one-week record of people entering Europe during the 2015 migration crisis, and nearly double the number of refugees <a href="#">recorded</a> by the United Nations during the first 11 days of the Kosovo war in 1999.</p> <p>The historic westward movement of people has caused lines of up to 24 hours at border checkpoints along Ukraine’s borders with Poland, Moldova, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, and prompted a vast humanitarian response by both governments and civilians. Refugees have been sheltered in repurposed schools as well as private apartments, makeshift camps, conference centers, upscale wineries and even the home of a Moldovan lawmaker.</p> <p>“We don’t know where we’re going,” said Anna Rogachova, 34, a homemaker from Odessa, a city on the Black Sea, minutes after crossing into Moldova with her 8-year-old daughter on Tuesday morning. “And we don’t know when we’re coming back.”</p> <p>“Let the world know,” Ms. Rogachova said, pointing at a multicolored suitcase in the back of her car. “We left everything. We put all our lives in this single bag.”</p> <p>Then, as the snow began to fall, she started to cry.</p>



Some refugees believe the war will end soon, allowing them to return quickly. Ms. Rogachova wasn't so sure.

If the displacement stretches out for years, it would present long-term challenges for Ukraine, which would face a brain drain of rare proportions, and for host countries where resources are limited and anti-immigrant sentiment has run strong. But it could mean opportunities; Eastern European countries like Moldova, which have experienced depopulation for decades, could suddenly find themselves boosted by a large, educated immigrant population.

Migration statistics can be imprecise, particularly in the opening stages of a chaotic new crisis, Peter Gatrell, a historian of European migration at the University of Manchester in Britain, said in a phone interview.

But to leading migration historians like Professor Gatrell, the scenes nevertheless already summon echoes of the great migrations in European history, including those in the 1940s, when several million people were displaced throughout Europe at the end of World War II.

United Nations officials have said the war could produce as many as four million refugees. If the fighting becomes protracted and Ukrainians continue to migrate at the current rate, that could be a conservative estimate, said Philipp Ther, professor of Central European history at the University of Vienna, and the author of a history of refugees in Europe since 1492.

"That would be on the scale of the postwar situation," Professor Ther said in a telephone interview.

Large numbers of civilians on the move could restrict the Ukrainian military's ability to maneuver, just as huge refugee flows hindered armies at the end of World War II, he said.

Such was the extent of the migration this week that secondary logjams also occurred at subsequent crossings far beyond Ukraine's borders, including on the Moldovan-Romanian border, 70 miles west of Ukraine, as some Ukrainians attempted to push on to friends and family based in Central Europe and beyond.

In some ways, the crisis was no surprise. In Moldova, the government had planned for months for a sudden influx, the Moldovan interior minister, Ana Revenco, said in a phone interview. But the scale of the crisis was shocking: By Monday night, 70,000 people — more than double the government's projections — had entered Moldova, a nation of just 2.6 million and one of Europe's poorest.

The flows include hardly any men aged between 18 and 60, whom the Kyiv government has barred from leaving Ukraine unless they have a medical condition that would restrict their ability to fight.

"In terms of the intensity," Ms. Revenco said, "it was probably something nobody was prepared for."

Lost in the grand narratives were the small and sad stories of individual people. Many were in shock — not only at the war itself, but also at the suddenness with which they had been ripped from a life of normalcy.

When war broke out on Thursday, Ms. Rogachova had just returned from a figure-skating competition in Kharkiv, where her daughter, Maria, 8, took first place.

A 17-year-old high school student had just celebrated her birthday in Odessa.

A 34-year-old singer had just come back to Ukraine from Russia, dismissing the talk of war.

On Tuesday morning, all three were in the Moldovan snow, unsure when or if they would return.



The singer, Julia Kondratieva, was even planning to press further west, fearing the war would spill over into Moldova. “It’s not a good idea to stay,” she said. “Maybe there will be fighting here.”

Leaving in such a rush, many had forgotten or abandoned their most prized belongings. Apart from clothes, food and essential documents, Ms. Rogachova had packed just her daughter’s skates.

As is common at the start of mass migrations, the earliest arrivals were often those with the money and the means to move quickly. At the Palanca border crossing in Moldova on Tuesday, the cars leaving Ukraine included four-by-fours and German-made sedans. At a nearby winery-cum-resort, most of the guests were Ukrainians, waiting to see if the war would ebb before deciding whether to push onward.

But there were also many without such options.

Trudging across the snowy border, there were mothers pushing strollers, a schoolgirl clutching her books, a woman carrying a bag of toilet paper and another carrying a small dog.

Some had decided to leave only hours before, after an increase in air raids around a previously calm Odessa.

Pushing her 1-year-old son in a stroller, Anna Hak, 28, said she’d initially tried to make a game of hiding in the air-raid shelters. “At first we played ‘Let’s hide from the thunder!’” said Ms. Hak, a teacher. “But then you see your hands are shaking and you realize you can’t pretend anymore.”

For some foreign nationals, particularly from the developing world, escaping from Ukraine was particularly traumatic. A group of Vietnamese workers were quickly housed in a makeshift government camp in Moldova on Tuesday. But African refugees have reported widespread discrimination making it especially hard for them to leave; on the Polish border, a Times reporter observed that Africans were being processed far slower than Ukrainians.

Christian, 30, an electrical engineer from Congo, who only gave his first name to avoid problems with the authorities, said he had been waiting 20 hours to pass. After traveling by train from Odessa, he was worried what was to come. After eight years studying and working in Ukraine, he said, he did not know where he could go. “There is war here and there is war in Congo.”

But at least he had documents, he said. “There are many here without papers,” he said. “What will happen to them?”

One Ukrainian woman went into labor while on a bus to the border, forcing her to stay in Ukraine, according to an Israeli charity, United Hatzalah, that assisted her.

Another pregnant woman, Maria Voinscaia, made it to Moldova just in time, and was scheduled to give birth by cesarean section on Wednesday.

Did she wonder when her child might first see Ukraine? “I don’t even want to think about it,” Ms. Voinscaia, 31, said in a phone interview from a hospital. “Last week I couldn’t even imagine it.”

For some, the thought of a permanent rupture from their homeland had deepened their sense of Ukrainian identity.

On the night before they all left for Moldova, Ms. Rogachova hunkered down with her daughter, Maria, and mother, Viktoria Tkatchenko — all native Russian speakers.

“Never, ever forget you’re Ukrainian,” Ms. Tkatchenko had told Maria.

“We’ll speak Ukrainian at home,” Maria had promised.

	<p>But now it wasn't clear where home was.</p> <p>Ms. Tkatchenko was heading to Chisinau, the Moldovan capital, to stay with an aunt. Ms. Rogachova and her daughter were heading to Germany to stay with friends of friends.</p> <p>And standing in the snow, Ms. Rogachova was again in tears.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Surge of unifying moral outrage</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/zelensky-ukraine-war-outrage.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/zelensky-ukraine-war-outrage.html</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS — The man the Kremlin holds in dismissive contempt, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, has emerged as an online hero. His <a href="#">Twitter account</a> has leapt by hundreds of thousands of followers a day (he now has 4.3 million). Often dressed in olive-green fleece and cargo pants, he has accused Russia of war crimes, signed a formal application to join the European Union, and morphed into a symbol of hope and grace under pressure.</p> <p>As Russia pursues its ruthless invasion, Mr. Zelensky has used social media adroitly to outmaneuver his nemesis, President Vladimir V. Putin. So, too, have many of the 44 million citizens of Ukraine. <a href="#">TikTok</a>, the video-sharing app with more than a billion active users, has shaped views of the conflict and contributed to an intense wave of global sympathy for Ukraine. Call it Resistance 4.0, the influencers' war against an unprovoked Russian invasion.</p> <p>Mr. Putin's assault against a phantom "genocide" in Ukraine meets the nimbleness, even the humor, of a people unified and galvanized by the Russian leader's obsessive talk of their nonexistence as a nation. The Russian leader also claims the war is nonexistent and is in fact "a special military operation."</p> <p>Technology, blamed of late for every ill from the death of truth to the spread of loneliness, restores feeling and revives human connection as the war unfolds. Brave civilians brandishing newly acquired rifles against armored divisions cannot leave the onlooker cold.</p> <p>"I don't really have any choice because this is my home," Hlib Bondarenko, a computer programmer who has lined up for his weapon in Kyiv, tells The New York Times in a <a href="#">video</a>. This is not the remote, clinical war of drones and satellites. It poses perhaps the most acute moral question of war, especially one pitting the weak and righteous against Goliath: What would I do?</p> <p>The answer appears to be: <i>something</i>, at least. Protest marches have unfurled under blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flags across Europe and the United States, from Chicago to Warsaw, from Berlin to New York. Ukrainians living abroad have lined up to return home and fight. As with the Spanish Civil War, when volunteers flocked to support the left-leaning government against a military rebellion, the conscience of Europe has stirred. Taboos have tumbled.</p> <p>Swedish and Finnish and Swiss neutrality has evaporated. Postwar Germany's refusal to prioritize military spending and send arms to conflict zones has ended. A united 27-nation European Union has decided, for the first time, to provide Ukraine with more than half-a-billion dollars in aid for lethal weapons. The outright collapse of the Russian economy is declared an objective by the French economy minister.</p> <p>"It's a sea change," said Anne-Claire Legendre, the spokeswoman for the French Foreign Ministry. "A new world has defied Putin, the master of propaganda."</p> <p>Salomé Zourabichvili, the president of Georgia, told France Inter, a French radio station, that "Putin has already failed because he has given birth to a monster: European power and European defense."</p> <p>The outcome of the five-day-old war is of course still in the balance, with Russia unleashing a rocket assault on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, and a Russian military convoy, at least 40 miles long,</p>

poised north of Kyiv. But if Mr. Putin planned a blitzkrieg to decapitate Ukraine in short order, the impact of his plan with reality has been confounding.

Nowhere has the European sea change been more pronounced than in Germany, where one legacy of Nazism was reluctance to exercise national power to the full. Another was hesitancy over confronting Russia, one of the countries Hitler invaded. All that ended on the date of the Russian invasion, Feb. 24, 2022, “a turning point in the history of our continent,” as Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

He told the Bundestag, the Parliament, on Sunday that “at the heart of the matter is whether power can break the law.” That was also the question in Berlin in 1933 as Hitler took control. It is therefore an existential question for Germany. The essential issue, Mr. Scholz said, was whether “we find it within ourselves to set limits to an international warmonger like Putin.”

The war, in other words, is a pivotal moral challenge to the 21st-century world, as seen by the power that committed the greatest moral outrage of the last century.

This, after all, is a war in which a nuclear power, Russia, confronts a state, Ukraine, that gave up its nuclear weapons in 1994 in exchange for Russian promises that its sovereignty and territorial integrity would be respected.

The Ukrainian online counter attack is unrelenting. In a [TikTok video](#), a young Ukrainian woman in a red hat and trainers offers a primer on how to drive captured or abandoned Russian military vehicles. She pushes buttons, flicks switches, yanks the gear stick, and, with a smile, surges off into the snow, gripping an unwieldy steering wheel.

If Mr. Putin’s solemn face is the image of the autocrat who believes that a country spanning 11 time zones is not big enough, and that Europe’s break from war has gone on long enough, this playful Ukrainian driver of a Russian tank appears as the impish personification of the 21st century meeting the 19th. The video, with 8.7 million views, has gone viral.

Mr. Putin’s Russia leveled Grozny during the Chechnya war. It leveled Aleppo in Syria. Can it level Kyiv with a TikTok world watching? The question hangs over the war as the Russian leader’s frustration grows.

Just over a decade has passed since social media played the role of great liberator, connecting the youth of the Arab world in uprisings against their despotic rulers. But technology, it transpired, was twin-souled like Goethe’s Faust. The organizing tool of the freedom fighter might equally serve the surveillance system of the despot.

Facebook, owned by Meta, was used by the military in Myanmar to stir a frenzy of hatred against the Muslim Rohingya that led to the mass expulsion and genocide that began in 2016. It was used by Russian intelligence agencies to interfere in the 2016 American election.

But the war in Ukraine has demonstrated some lessons learned, as well as the enduring liberalizing potential inherent in a borderless virtual world.

Big tech companies like Google, Meta and Apple have taken several steps to counter the Russian disinformation that proved so effective in the past. At the same time, their platforms have revealed growing Russian opposition to Mr. Putin’s war and allowed Ukrainian influencers to display the courage of a nation where, from rural village to metropolis, nobody appears to be surrendering.

If the idea of truth, in the United States as elsewhere, appeared to have been lost in the disorienting bombardment of social media, with the line between fact and falsehood ever fainter, the sheer enormity of Russian lies — the denial of the existence of a war, for example — appears to have done something to restore its value and importance.

“Who else but us?” said Zakhar Nychpor, a Ukrainian actor, as he armed himself with a rifle. Who else indeed and what truth more raw?

Ivan Andronic, a plumber who moved from his native Moldova to France 18 years ago, said in an interview that he felt his mother and mother-in-law back in Moldova were now at risk. Mr. Putin could do anything, even embark on nuclear war. “He is very dangerous,” Mr. Andronic said. “We must fight him together, and his own population must turn on him.”

Togetherness is a word enjoying a revival. The Ukraine war appears to have dented a cycle of growing loneliness in which Covid-19 played a significant part. The unbearable lightness of online being has given way to the unbearable gravity of a European war.

A break has occurred in the world where people are corralled into herds by social media algorithms, trolls and bots. Where they forsake community to become tribes with megaphones. Where they turn in circles, succumbing to technological neuroticism. Above all, where they grow lonelier, caught in a vortex, starved of connective tissue, hungry for status, often bereft of moral conviction.

In their place, quite suddenly, a life-and-death struggle presents itself with its moral imperatives. As Europe initially hesitated, Donald Tusk, a former Polish prime minister and the president of the European People’s Party, tweeted:

“In this war everything is real: Putin’s madness and cruelty, Ukrainian victims, bombs falling on Kyiv. Only your sanctions are pretended. Those EU government’s, which blocked tough decisions (i.a. Germany, Hungary, Italy) have disgraced themselves.”

Very soon, almost overnight, Europe did what it is rarely capable of doing. It united to end that disgrace and face down Mr. Putin.

As the German philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote, “Under conditions of terror, most people will comply but some will not. Humanly speaking, no more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a fit place for human habitation.”

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HEADLINE	03/01 India tries to stay above the fray
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/asia/india-russia-united-states-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/asia/india-russia-united-states-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI — When <a href="#">India abstained</a> from a United Nations vote and the chorus of Western condemnation against <a href="#">the Ukraine invasion</a>, it appeared to be taking sides: offering tacit support for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.</p> <p>After all, the two nations’ deep ties are decades old, and their leaders, who have <a href="#">met nearly 20 times</a> since <a href="#">Narendra Modi</a> became prime minister of India in 2014, share a similar vision of <a href="#">muscular nationalism</a>.</p> <p>But India was more subtle in its move, driven by its vulnerability in a hostile neighborhood that forces the country to play a constant balancing act between Moscow and Washington.</p> <p>India needs both the United States and Russia to contain China, which is pushing up against its borders and gaining influence with its neighbors. And it has been trying to navigate both sides over the war with Ukraine.</p> <p>The Indian government hasn’t offered outright support for Western positions or sanctions, because abandoning Moscow, a time-tested partner and its largest supplier of weapons, would leave India increasingly isolated in the region. But it has called for a return to diplomacy and engaged with Moscow’s adversaries, including Ukraine — seemingly a break from the past where India would keep discontent private.</p>

“This particular decision is a product of the geopolitical circumstances that India is looking at this point in time,” said Happymon Jacob, who teaches India’s foreign policy at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

Mr. Jacob described India’s situation in its immediate region of South and Central Asia as a “claustrophobia” that would get worse if India angered Russia. Chinese troops have been building up on the Indian border in the Himalayas, with the two countries on war footing for nearly two years after deadly skirmishes.

Russia’s mutual relations with India and China gives the Modi government a mediating force in the case of escalation. Russia is also a close partner in places like Afghanistan, where the American retreat has left India out in the cold.

The United States provides defensive help for India, which has increased its purchase of American military equipment significantly in recent years. And the two, along with Australia and Japan, are cooperating on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific as part of the Quad alliance.

The balancing act on Ukraine does not entirely satisfy either side, and India could face scrutiny as Western nations increase sanctions on Russia.

Historically, India has continued bilateral trade during moments of tension through creative currency arrangements that date to the Cold War.

If India did set up such an arrangement this time, it wouldn’t help Russia much. The scale of the two nations’ bilateral trade, about \$9 billion, is less than one-tenth of Russia’s trade with its largest trading partner, China.

India also knows such deals can anger U.S. officials. India initially found ways to work around the American sanctions on Iran by importing oil and settling accounts largely in Indian currency. But it had to seek oil from other sources after the Trump administration in 2019 closed that loophole.

“This is an evolving situation, and we have to see what kind of impact the sanctions will have on our own interests,” Harsh Vardhan Shringla, India’s foreign secretary, said at a recent news conference. “We have to study this carefully because any sanctions will have impact on our existing relationships. We have to acknowledge that factor.”

Indian leaders have been working the phone since the Russian invasion began, with Mr. Modi speaking to both his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts, and his foreign minister engaged with diplomats around the world. The government is also occupied with an emergency that hits closer to home: trying to evacuate thousands of Indian citizens stuck in Ukraine.

Mr. Modi’s political opposition has been using emotional videos of stranded students appealing for help to criticize his government. But criticism of India’s position on the war has remained subdued, reflecting the reality that the opposition was also stuck in a similar balancing act when it was last in power.

After India became a republic following the end of British rule in 1947, the country had a neutral position — although its founding prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had a soft spot for Communist Russia.

But India tilted toward the Soviet Union in the 1970s, when it saw the United States providing military and financial support to its archenemy, Pakistan. The Soviets came to India’s aid.

India now [relies on Russia](#) for more than 60 percent of its military equipment. And Russia has often voted to support India in international forums, including refraining from criticism of its nuclear weapons tests in the 1990s.

India's bonds with the United States are the tightest they've ever been, increasingly connected by the [shared threat in the rise of an aggressive China](#). India's spending on military equipment from the United States has gone from nearly zero to about \$20 billion in just a little over a decade.

That proximity has created challenges, notably in the abrupt way the United States pulled out of Afghanistan, where India was closely coordinating its interests. While the troubled exit created some hesitancy among government officials and outside advisers, it has not significantly dented what Mr. Jacob described as a "growing sentiment of pro Americanism" on larger issues of strategic security.

Pankaj Saran, a former deputy national security adviser who was also India's ambassador to Moscow, said Russian relations have been tested in recent years by American ties. The Russians have expressed dismay at how closely India was working with the United States in Afghanistan, and both the Russians and the Chinese, he said, have seen the increased purchase of American weapons "in a magnified manner, extremely magnified."

"We have had to face a lot of fire from both of them about this growth in the relationship with the U.S.," Mr. Saran said.

While American and European officials have been urging India's support for their measures against Russia, they appear to understand India's strategic needs.

Ned Price, a U.S. State Department spokesman, acknowledged in recent news briefings that "India has a relationship with Russia that is distinct from the relationship that we have with Russia." Even after India abstained from the U.N. vote on Ukraine, Mr. Price said the two countries had "a very close relationship" and were in regular discussion about "our shared concerns."

American officials have previously acknowledged India's complicated security environment.

When India bought a \$5.4 billion Russian missile defense system, Indian officials brushed aside suggestions that the deal violated American sanctions, saying negotiations started before the measure went into effect in 2017.

And the reaction from U.S. officials was muted in December 2021 after India announced during a visit to New Delhi by Mr. Putin that supplies for that system had started arriving.

Many in the U.S. Congress echoed India's position that the purchase was needed to counter the threat of China. James O'Brien, nominated by President Biden to oversee sanctions policy at the State Department, said in his confirmation hearing that the United States was discouraging the purchase, but that any prospect of penalizing India would have to be weighed against the "important geostrategic considerations, particularly with the relationship to China."

"I think there is sincere desire on India's part to douse the fires a little bit, to not exacerbate, to not contribute to the 'us vs. them' paradigm," Mr. Saran, the former Indian security adviser, said about the continuing tensions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "When the dust settles down, people are going to take a more long-term and strategic approach to the role of India."

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HEADLINE	03/01 Spurning rebukes Russia escalates attack
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/europe/ukraine-russia-war.html</a>
GIST	KYIV, Ukraine — Brushing aside international outrage, Russia widened its assault deep inside Ukraine on Tuesday, bombing civilian areas in the two biggest cities, amassing a miles-long convoy near the capital's doorstep and warning an outside world intent on economic reprisals not to go too far.



The Russian attacks hit a hospital in Kharkiv — the second consecutive day of lethal Russian strikes on that eastern city's civilian population — and a deadly blast struck a broadcasting tower in the capital, Kyiv, knocking out television and radio stations. A famous Holocaust memorial nearby sustained damage.

The escalation came amid rumors in Moscow and other Russian cities that the government might increase conscription to bolster its troop strength in Ukraine, where a surprisingly defiant resistance appears to have frustrated Kremlin expectations of quick victory. Now, the conflict in Ukraine looks as if it might become a more drawn-out fight that could plunge Europe into its worst refugee crisis of this century as hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians seek safety elsewhere.

With the Russian economy already reeling from an array of sanctions, associates of President Vladimir V. Putin reacted sharply to a declaration by France's finance minister that Europe would wage "total economic and financial war" against Russia.

"Watch your tongue, gentlemen!" Dmitri A. Medvedev, a former Russian prime minister, declared on Twitter. "And don't forget that in human history, economic wars quite often turned into real ones."

On Tuesday, the sixth day of the invasion, satellite images showed a miles-long Russian military convoy making its way on a roadway north of Kyiv as a number of homes and buildings burned nearby. When it would make a move to enter the capital remained unclear.

The Kyiv transmission tower was struck after the Russian Defense Ministry had warned civilians to evacuate. Moscow said its military was engaged in "high-precision" strikes to "prevent information attacks against Russia."

But damage from the strike also extended to Kyiv's Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, built in a ravine where tens of thousands of Jews were killed by the Nazis during World War II. President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, who is Jewish, denounced the strike, which he said had killed five people.

"What is the point of saying 'never again' for 80 years, if the world stays silent when a bomb drops on the same site of Babyn Yar?" he said on Twitter.

In the main square of Kharkiv, an apparent rocket strike devastated a large administrative building, igniting a fireball and killing seven people, officials said. The city's mayor said another rocket attack on a residential neighborhood had destroyed a hospital and left several people dead or maimed.

The Russian attacks came just hours before the Kremlin's most powerful critic, President Biden, was scheduled to give his first State of the Union speech in Washington.

"What we are seeing is basically Phase II, which is a shift to much more brutal, tactless, unrestricted warfare, which will lead to many more civilian casualties and bloodier battles," said Mathieu Boulègue, an expert in Russian warfare at Chatham House, a research group in London.

Mr. Zelensky, who has spoken to Mr. Biden several times since the invasion, accused Russia of war crimes for having deliberately targeted civilians in its bombardment of his country.

Now regarded as a hero in the West for his defiance of Russian bullying, Mr. Zelensky also reiterated Ukraine's plea to join the European Union, in an emotional speech to European lawmakers made via video link. Prospects for that outcome are considered unrealistic.

"We have proven our strength," he said through his English-language interpreter, [who sobbed as he translated the words](#). "So do prove that you are with us. Prove that you will not let us go. Prove that you indeed are Europeans."

Overnight, many of the capital's 2.8 million inhabitants huddled in bomb shelters as air raid sirens wailed. Ukraine's foreign ministry released [a video](#) Tuesday morning of children in a bunker singing the city's anthem.

Many people, anticipating the worst, spent their time preparing. In a six-story Kyiv building, dozens of men in military uniforms, Kalashnikovs slung across their shoulders, worked with civilian volunteers to sort donations from Ukrainians who wanted to support the army. "We have received a lot of donations of medicine and hygiene equipment," said one volunteer, Maria Pysarenko. "What we need most are helmets and bulletproof vests."

Mr. Zelensky said that 16 Ukrainian children had died from Russian shelling over the first four days of fighting.

The slow pace of the Russian advance since the invasion began on Feb. 24 surprised some outside experts, who had expected a rout and the quick capture of major cities. But Moscow was clearly tightening its grip.

Videos showed Russian troops [patrolling](#) Kherson, in the south of Ukraine, although Ukrainians were still in control of the city, according to Janes, the defense intelligence research group. And in Mariupol, a critical port city, the mayor said residents lacked electricity and heat after days of intense fighting. Capturing Mariupol would allow Russian forces in the south to join with Russian-backed separatists in the east, isolating Ukrainian troops in the region.

The United Nations refugee agency warned that Europe would soon face its "largest refugee crisis this century." In just the past 24 hours, it said, more than 150,000 Ukrainians had flooded across the borders, bringing the total number so far to about 660,000.

In Palanca, Moldova, near Ukraine's southwest border, a tent camp was rising to house Europe's newest refugees.

"We don't know where we're going," said Anna Rogachova, 34, a homemaker from Odessa. "And we don't know when we're coming back."

A second round of Russian-Ukrainian negotiations aimed at halting the conflict was scheduled for Wednesday, but that news was all but obscured by other developments that pointed to more fighting and Russia's diminished international standing.

Mr. Biden announced on Tuesday in his State of the Union address that the United States would ban Russian aircraft from American airspace, following moves by the European Union and Canada to shut airspace to passenger flights from Russia and to planes used by Russian oligarchs.

The top court of the Council of Europe, an organization that includes Russia, ordered Moscow to "refrain from military attacks against civilians and civilian objects" and to "ensure immediately the safety of the medical establishments, personnel and emergency vehicles."

At a United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva, about 100 diplomats, many from Western countries, walked out of a speech by Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, in protest of the invasion. That left a largely empty hall to hear Mr. Lavrov.

He had planned to attend the session in person, but spoke by video link instead, saying that the European bans on flights from Russia had prevented his travel.

Russia's growing isolation was seen in other ways, too. Apple, the world's most valuable company, suspended sales in Russia, joining other multinational businesses in protesting the invasion. Two major U.S. manufacturers, Boeing and Ford Motor, suspended their business activities in Russia.



Andrei Kozyrev, a former Russian foreign minister known for his pro-Western approach, called on all Russian diplomats to resign in protest over their country's "bloody fratricidal war in Ukraine," urging them to act as "professionals, not as cheap propagandists."

Some of Russia's staunchest allies in Latin America have notably not endorsed the invasion. And on Tuesday, even China, which unlike many nations has refrained from denouncing the attack, seemed to put some distance between itself and Russia. China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, who spoke to his counterpart in Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, called on Russia and Ukraine to seek a negotiated settlement and expressed concern about the harm to civilians.

In Russia, public alarm appeared to grow over how the sanctions imposed by the West would affect the country's financial stability, with people rushing for the second day to withdraw cash from banks. And some took to the streets to protest the invasion — a remarkable display of defiance in a country where prosecutors sometimes seek prison sentences for demonstrators.

On Monday, the police detained at least 411 people in 13 cities, said one activist group, OVD-Info. To date since the invasion began, it said, there have been at least 6,435 detentions.

For all the harm the sanctions may portend for Russia, they are a double-edge sword, their effects rippling across the world economy.

With oil prices spiking to well above \$100 a barrel, the International Energy Agency said Tuesday that member countries had agreed to release 60 million barrels of oil from emergency reserves. The agency said the aim was to send "a unified and strong message to global oil markets that there will be no shortfall as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine."

While hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were fleeing, some expatriates were choosing another course: They were making their way back home.

"We have to rebuild Ukraine," Daria Kliuieva, 23, said after arriving Tuesday at the Polish border town of Medyka, ready to cross back into her homeland. Nearby, a long line of people, mostly men, were also waiting to return.

Ms. Kliuieva took out her phone to show a photo of four young cousins bundled in jackets and blankets in a bunker back home. Six months ago, she landed a job cleaning rooms in a hotel in Gdansk, hoping to save enough money to buy an apartment back home in Kharkiv.

"That doesn't matter anymore," she said.

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HEADLINE	03/01 New Orleans celebrates Mardi Gras return
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/mardi-gras-returns-new-orleans.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/mardi-gras-returns-new-orleans.html</a>
GIST	<p>NEW ORLEANS — Jeremy Stevenson didn't know if he could do it this year.</p> <p>Normally, Mr. Stevenson, a chief within the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian tradition, spends an entire year sewing an elaborate suit that pays homage to the Native American tribes who took in people who escaped slavery.</p> <p>But after the city's devastating coronavirus spike following Mardi Gras in 2020 and the Covid-related death of his cousin Keelian Boyd last year at age 37, Mr. Stevenson could barely look at the beads and the feathers he needed to make this year's suit.</p> <p>Then, last spring, he heard a voice, his cousin's, telling him, "You've got to do this." He began spending long days sewing while keeping an eye on Covid-19 case counts, wary of any rise that could prompt the city to go into lockdown and cancel Mardi Gras again.</p>

And just after noon on Tuesday, as members of his tribe, the Monogram Hunters, shook their tambourines and beat their drums, Mr. Stevenson emerged from a corner building in the city's Tremé neighborhood wearing a five-foot-tall crown with five arrows of hot-pink feathers framing his head and a sequined suit of lime green, purple, blue and white, ornamented with crystals from chandeliers, shimmering silver broaches and oval prisms of glass.

"What you see in this suit, shining like jewelry, that's from Dump's spirit floating in me," he said, using Mr. Boyd's nickname and fighting back tears.

Across New Orleans, in a combination of joy, defiance, trepidation and celebration, Mardi Gras returned on Tuesday with one eye on the pain of the past two years in a city especially hard hit by the pandemic and the other very much looking forward to strutting, parading and moving on.

Last year, all Carnival parades were canceled, and celebrations were scaled back to small, same-household gatherings and decorated porches known as "house floats." But this month, New Orleans's Carnival celebration returned in full swing, raising hopes about the city's resurgence from devastating pandemic losses.

Mary Beth Romig, a spokeswoman with New Orleans & Company, the city's tourism association, hesitated to estimate the total number of visitors to the city but said that parade routes have been packed every day. "It's almost like having missed it, people are really clamoring for it and hungry to be out there again," Ms. Romig said. The city typically sees a million people join in the festivities. Hotels said bookings were approaching prepandemic levels.

The celebration comes as Covid-19 hospitalizations continue to fall from a precipitous Omicron-fueled rise in January. Hospitalizations have dropped to 586 from a high of more than 3,000 in August.

It is too early to say whether that trend will hold: If hospitalizations were going to rise from Mardi Gras celebrations, that would not be evident for at least a week, said Thomas LaVeist, dean of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

Still, Professor LaVeist thought that the event could serve as "an important test," with impacts far beyond New Orleans. "It will give us all a good idea of what life with Covid could look like — within the new normal," said Professor LaVeist, who added that he cautiously attended one small parade and wore a medical mask at all times.

For weeks, the town has hummed with the familiar sights and sounds of Carnival. Crowds of mostly tourists, their necks loaded with plastic Mardi Gras beads, have swarmed to the eight-block stretch of Bourbon Street that is lined with bars, restaurants and strip clubs. Bartenders poured quarts of rainbow-colored daiquiris into plastic cups. From overhead balconies, people threw beads down to waiting arms. French Quarter music venues like Preservation Hall sold out several shows a day.

It seemed as though the city had succeeded in forgetting Covid-19.

But beneath the surface, the effects of the pandemic were entwined into all parts of the sprawling celebration. Craft-supply stores struggled to find safety pins, feathers, bolts of satin and boxes of glue from wholesalers struck by backed-up supply chains. Artists and musicians created spectacular Carnival masterpieces dedicated to loved ones lost to the coronavirus.

And not everyone was sure the scramble was worth it.

"I think people were willing to take risks and have Mardi Gras if they could pay their bills," said Angela Chalk, a New Orleans native who runs a local environmental nonprofit and has a background in public health, noting the economic payoff tourism offers after the financial hit of two slow years. "But give us three weeks. Then we'll know if the risk was worth it."

At city hall, health department staff doubled down to enforce rules, implement more layers of monitoring and expand testing.

Dr. Jennifer Avegno, director of the department, said she had spent nearly a year consulting with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and national public-health experts, hoping to answer one question: “If we have Mardi Gras, how can we make sure it’s not the tragedy it was?” — referring to 2020, when the city became an early pandemic hot spot after the coronavirus spread, unchecked, within unaware, vast crowds.

“Two years ago, Mardi Gras was like free publicity for a germ,” said Glen David Andrews, a jazz trombonist. He recalled the almost-unceasing sound of sirens, as ambulances brought people to hospitals, which soon filled to capacity. Deaths in the city climbed to the highest per capita rate in the nation.

“Nearly everyone I knew was grieving someone,” said Mr. Andrews, who often showed up outside funeral services to play a solo version of “Just a Closer Walk With Thee,” as the coffins of fallen musicians, family members and friends were carried to hearses.

To limit the spread of the virus this Carnival season, Mayor LaToya Cantrell in January reinstated strict mitigation efforts, including an indoor mask mandate and a requirement that anyone who eats, drinks or watches a performance indoors must show proof of vaccination or a recent negative coronavirus test. Krewe members who rode on floats or attended balls had to show similar proof to their captains.

Dr. Avegno and her staff have handed out 20,000 home-testing kits while walking parade routes. A booth by the baggage claim at the New Orleans airport offered vaccinations and tests to arriving visitors. And earlier this month, the city implemented wastewater monitoring in two of its treatment plants, allowing it to track any increases in overall viral levels.

Both Dr. Avegno and Professor LaVeist agree that cases are likely to rise as crowds fill the city’s streets, hotels, restaurants and bars.

Still, despite virus-related concerns and sorrow — or perhaps because of them — crowds seemed happier than ever to be along the St. Charles Avenue route in parades leading up to Mardi Gras day.

This month at Preservation Hall, the managing director, Mike Martinovich, 52, said he felt a “degree of guttural enthusiasm” from performers in recent shows, many of whom had been unable to play indoors in front of crowds for nearly two years.

At midnight on Tuesday, the Bourbon Street party will come to a close with mounted New Orleans Police Department officers, six horses wide, who ceremoniously ride down the street each year followed by the mayor, on foot with a phalanx of police officers.

But for the city’s health department, Mardi Gras won’t be over until all the data is in. The next morning, on Ash Wednesday, all the city’s drive-through and walk-up testing sites will be open and staffed up.

“We want people to be able to test as soon as they feel a sniffle,” Dr. Avegno said, adding, “We expect a bump in cases, but if it’s not a significant bump, the effect on our hospitals will be manageable. And that’s what we’re hoping for.”

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HEADLINE	03/01 Meteorological spring has begun
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/meteorological-spring-has-begun">https://komonews.com/news/local/meteorological-spring-has-begun</a>
GIST	March 1, 2022 — During the very heavy rain the last few days many of us are wishing to see more sunshine and take advantage of the days getting longer. A sign that more pleasant weather is on the way is

when the Spring season arrives. If you think that the start of Spring is almost a month away, good news! today is the first day of Meteorological Spring.

Instead of using Astronomical Seasons that rely on the tilt of the earth in relation to the angle of the sun and the location of earth inside the elliptical orbit on a solstice or equinox we can keep it much simpler.

There are 2 Types of Season Change:

Meteorological Seasons or Astronomical Seasons; the start and end dates are different with the Astronomical seasons changing a day or two every year but Meteorological Seasons consistently start and end on the same dates.

Meteorologists use the same dates to define each season. That helps organize record keeping for all of the changes day to day, year to year. The Spring start is March 1st, the end of Spring is May 31st. This is the time of year that the cool winter season and warm summer season are wrestling for control of the northern hemisphere's thermostat. The Spring Swing is a fun way to describe the quick changes in weather caused by mild temperatures one day quickly cooling down as a chilly wind arrives. The most unsettled weather commonly happens in-between the seasons of winter and summer, and vice versa.

As we begin our Spring, here are the averages from Sea-Tac (since 1945) that show changes through the first month of the season...

Notice how the average high temperature on March 1st warms up, on average, 4 to 6 degrees, by the end of the month! The average high goes up around 18 degrees warmer from March 1st to May 31st. The increasing amount of sunshine as days get longer and the increasingly warmer air masses contribute to that. The low temperatures tend to warm more slowly, in part, because of surrounding bodies of water.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Russia attack impacts salmon project plan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/russian-invasion-changes-crucial-pnw-salmon-project-plans">https://www.q13fox.com/news/russian-invasion-changes-crucial-pnw-salmon-project-plans</a>
GIST	<p><b>WASHINGTON</b> - <a href="#">Russia's attack on Ukraine</a> is having ripple effects across the world, including a multi-million dollar salmon research project that scientists hope will unlock key answers for the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>An international team including scientists from Russia, Canada, Japan and the Republic of Korea began work at the beginning of February. Teams are trying to figure out what <a href="#">determines whether a salmon that migrates across the North Pacific comes back alive</a>.</p> <p>The work is considered a first in terms of the size and scope of the survey which will track salmon in the open sea, and collect a variety of measurements and samples.</p> <p>Due to the <a href="#">Ukraine-Russia conflict</a>, however, some plans have changed.</p> <p>According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), plans changed – <a href="#">U.S. citizens are no longer boarding the Russian vessel</a> that is part of the project.</p> <p>"Without a U.S. Chief Scientist on board the ship, the TINRO cannot conduct research within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone," Michael Milstein, a NOAA Fisheries spokesperson. "Research by the TINRO outside the U.S. EEZ will continue as planned."</p> <p>Dozens of scientists are involved in the ongoing research, details on how this change would affect various research projects that are part of the overall trip were not immediately available.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 AAA: traveler confidence rebounds in 2022</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/aaa-traveler-confidence-rebounding-in-2022-as-covid-19-cases-drop">https://www.q13fox.com/news/aaa-traveler-confidence-rebounding-in-2022-as-covid-19-cases-drop</a>
GIST	<p><b>CHARLOTTE, N.C.</b> - The American Automobile Association reported the 2022 travel season is off to a much stronger start compared to a year ago as bookings have increased.</p> <p>The agency said a new quarterly survey showed that traveler confidence is on the rise.</p> <p>Sixty-three percent of Floridians reported feeling comfortable traveling now – a significant increase from 40% in early 2021, according to the agency.</p> <p>Based on the responses, AAA cites the boost in travel confidence is due to the COVID-19 vaccine, belief that the risk of contracting the virus is the same wherever they go, people are more knowledgeable and less afraid about the virus, the implementation of enhanced safety measures and reports that COVID-19 cases and deaths are declining.</p> <p>"While some of this is the excitement of getting back to traveling, there are those who have more money to spend after traveling less in recent years. Additionally, we're beginning to see customers apply travel vouchers they may have received after postponing a previous trip, due to the pandemic," Debbie Haas, Vice President of Travel for AAA, <a href="#">said in a news release</a>.</p> <p>Haas said she is seeing renewed enthusiasm from people wanting to travel to the Caribbean and Europe. She also noticed an increased interest in people taking cruises.</p> <p>"This will be the first full year of cruising since the pandemic began," Haas continued. "Last year, cruising began building back in the summer with most ships at reduced capacity."</p> <p>Royal Caribbean, Carnival Cruise Line and Norwegian Cruise Line <a href="#">announced they were easing their mask mandates</a>.</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic, the cruise industry struggled to stay afloat.</p> <p>Last December, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned people not to go on cruises, regardless of their vaccination status, because of onboard outbreaks fueled by the omicron variant. The CDC said it had more than 90 cruise ships under investigation or observation as a result of COVID-19 outbreaks. The agency did not disclose the number of infections.</p> <p>However, AAA said there are still lingering concerns about COVID-19. Forty-one percent of respondents said it's challenging to understand the COVID-related requirements for international travel. As a result, it's affecting their willingness or ability to plan a trip.</p> <p>"There's that segment of people who really want to go, but are hesitant because they're unclear about COVID requirements or stressed about encountering issues while traveling," Haas continued.</p> <p>The CDC recently outlined the new set of measures for communities where COVID-19 is easing its grip, with less of a focus on positive test results and more on what's happening at hospitals.</p> <p>The new system greatly changes the look of the CDC's risk map and puts more than 70% of the U.S. population in counties where the coronavirus is posing a low or medium threat to hospitals. Those are the people who can stop wearing masks, the agency said.</p> <p>The new recommendations do not change the requirement to wear masks on public transportation and indoors in airports, train stations and bus stations. The CDC guidelines for other indoor spaces aren't binding, meaning cities and institutions even in areas of low risk may set their own rules. And the agency says people with COVID-19 symptoms or who test positive shouldn't stop wearing masks.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Hawaii to drop Covid travel quarantine rules</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/hawaii-to-drop-covid-19-travel-quarantine-rules-this-month">https://www.q13fox.com/news/hawaii-to-drop-covid-19-travel-quarantine-rules-this-month</a>
GIST	<p><b>HONOLULU (AP)</b> - Hawaii plans to lift its COVID-19 quarantine requirement for travelers on March 25, meaning those arriving after that date from other places in the U.S. won't have to show proof of vaccination or a negative test to avoid sequestering themselves for five days.</p> <p>Hawaii is the only U.S. state to implement a coronavirus quarantine program of this kind.</p> <p>Gov. David Ige said at a news conference the requirement saved lives and was a major factor in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in the islands. Hawaii has one of the lowest coronavirus infection rates in the nation.</p> <p>The quarantine period for travelers lasted 14 days when Hawaii first imposed it in March 2020. The state later created testing and vaccination exemptions.</p> <p>The state screened 11.3 million passengers since the testing exemption was launched in October 2020, Ige said.</p> <p>The governor said he would maintain Hawaii's indoor mask mandate at least through March 25, and would be evaluating whether to lift it after that.</p> <p>Those arriving in Hawaii from outside the U.S. still must adhere to U.S. federal guidelines.</p> <p>U.S. citizens, permanent residents and immigrants traveling to the U.S. are required to show a negative COVID-19 test or provide documentation they've recovered from an infection.</p> <p>Non-U.S. citizens and those not traveling to the U.S. on an immigrant visa must be fully vaccinated as well as show proof of a negative COVID-19 test or provide documentation of infection recovery.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Rain lets up but flooding still major issue</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/weather/rain-has-let-up-but-flooding-still-a-major-issue-through-early-thursday">https://www.q13fox.com/weather/rain-has-let-up-but-flooding-still-a-major-issue-through-early-thursday</a>
GIST	<p><b>Seattle</b> - The big weather story continues to be the dangerous flood situation around the region as a strong, subtropical atmospheric river slammed the Northwest with heavy rain and warm conditions. Highs went soaring above average today with Seattle hitting 57 and a few other spots landing in the low 60s. Normal for this time of year is 52.</p> <p>The huge river of moisture in the sky caused around a dozen rivers to jump into minor to moderate to major flood stages. And many of those rivers still running fast and high tonight still on a "watch" or "warning" list. We will see minor to moderate flooding around much of Western WA.</p> <p>As we move into Wednesday rain will pick up again but won't be as heavy or steady as we saw Sunday and Monday. Rivers will start to slowly recede as we push into Wednesday night and early Thursday morning.</p> <p>With grounds very saturated and soaked the threat of landslides will remain increased this week. Know your surroundings when traveling near hillsides and through the mountains.</p> <p>Both the morning and evening commutes Wednesday will see rain. Heaviest showers will come during the afternoon commute.</p> <p>By late in the day the Northern Cascades will start to see snow fall again as temperatures cool and snow levels drop. Lowland commuters see more rain, heavy at times.</p> <p>We're also keeping an eye on the chance for some isolated thunderstorms popping up Wednesday. Highs land near average in the low 50s.</p>



	<p>Showers will stay in the forecast through Thursday with afternoon clearing as we start to dry out. Highs cool and drop below average into the upper 40s.</p> <p>Drier and cooler conditions are forecast as we sail into the weekend. Highs hang in the low to mid 50s. Overnights sit near normal in the upper 30s.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Russia forces bombard, encircle Kyiv</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/world/ukraine-russia-war#kyiv-is-under-bombardment-as-russian-forces-move-to-encircle-the-capital">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/world/ukraine-russia-war#kyiv-is-under-bombardment-as-russian-forces-move-to-encircle-the-capital</a>
GIST	<p>As dawn broke in Ukraine on Wednesday, blasts were reported across Kyiv and air-raid sirens blared in cities across the country. A vast convoy of Russian tanks and mechanized vehicles continued its slow but steady advance on Kyiv, moving to encircle the capital in advance of what officials fear could be a brutal and prolonged siege of the city of nearly three million.</p> <p>Russian forces are trying to “advance in all directions,” the General Staff of Ukraine’s armed forces said early Wednesday. The Ukrainian Army said that Russian troops were being met by stiff resistance but were increasing missile and bomb attacks “to intimidate the civilian population.” “Stay strong, Ukrainians,” the message read. “Never surrender.”</p> <p>Russian forces may have suffered heavy losses over six days of fighting, and some might be dealing with low morale, Ukrainian and U.S. officials said. Still, the Russian troops are steadily moving to surround other key cities in Ukraine’s south and east, with attacks reported on hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure. They are laying siege to Kharkiv, a city of 1.5 million where people are cowering day and night in bunkers as supplies of food and water run low.</p> <p>Here are the latest developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia’s military said on Wednesday that it now controlled Kherson, a city north of the Crimean Peninsula. But the British Defense Intelligence agency said that Russian gains across the region had been limited and Ukrainian officials said the battle for control was continuing.</li> <li>• Overnight, Russian troops surrounded Mariupol, a key port city in the southeast. More than 120 civilians were being treated for injuries in hospitals. Residents baked 26 tons of bread to help withstand the coming onslaught, according to the mayor.</li> <li>• President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine sought to rally the nation on Wednesday. “Another night of Russia’s full-scale war against us, against the people, has passed,” he said in a message posted on Facebook. “Hard night. Someone spent that night in the subway — in a shelter. Someone spent it in the basement. Someone was luckier and slept at home.” Still, he said that Ukraine would fight on. “Today you, Ukrainians, are a symbol of invincibility.”</li> <li>• President Biden predicted that the invasion of Ukraine would “leave Russia weaker and the world stronger” during a fiery <a href="#">State of the Union address</a> on Tuesday night.</li> <li>• Mr. Biden said the United States planned to bar Russian planes from American airspace shortly, part of a global push to isolate Russia. The Justice Department will try to seize the assets of oligarchs and government officials allied with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.</li> <li>• Videos verified by The New York Times showed <a href="#">extensive damage to at least two large apartment buildings in the town of Borodyanka</a>, about 35 miles northwest of Kyiv. Witnesses and Ukraine’s deputy foreign minister said the damage was the result of Russian airstrikes.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Alaska Airlines halts Russian partnership</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/alaska-airlines-suspends-partnership-with-russian-airline/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/alaska-airlines-suspends-partnership-with-russian-airline/</a>
GIST	(SEATTLE) — Alaska Airlines said Tuesday it is suspending its partnership with a Russian airline over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“We are deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis taking place in Ukraine,” a statement from the Seattle-based airline said. “As a result, we are temporarily suspending our partnership with the Russian airline S7.”

Alaska Airline guests, as of March 1, will not be able to earn miles on S7, and Alaska’s work to enable redemptions on S7 also will stop.

Alaska said it has also suspended its limited interline relationships with S7 and Aeroflot, the largest carrier in Russia. Interlining allows passengers on one airline to be ticketed on a competing airline for various issues such as bad weather.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Monday announced a move to sever ties with Russian entities doing business with Washington state in protest of the invasion of Ukraine and urged private businesses in the state to consider cutting ties with Russia.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 FAA bars Russia aircraft from US airspace</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/faa-will-bar-russian-aircraft-from-u-s-airspace/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/faa-will-bar-russian-aircraft-from-u-s-airspace/</a>
GIST	<p>Under direction from the White House, the Federal Aviation Administration has banned all Russian aircraft from U.S. airspace.</p> <p>No Russian airliners or private jets will be allowed to land in or fly over the United States. President Joe Biden announced the closure Tuesday evening during the State of the Union address.</p> <p>The move in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine follows earlier bans in Europe and Canada.</p> <p>The UK banned Russian flights from its airspace on Thursday, the first day of the invasion. The European Union and Canada followed Sunday.</p> <p>The Russian Civil Aviation Authority took reciprocal action against those countries, closing its own airspace to the airlines of 36 countries as of Monday.</p> <p>And for safety reasons no airlines can fly over or close to the war itself, including Ukraine, Belarus and eastern Russia.</p> <p>In 2014, Russian-backed forces took over eastern parts of Ukraine and in the conflict that ensued shot down a Boeing 777 operated by Malaysia Airlines with a surface-to-air missile, killing all 298 people on board.</p> <p>The Canadian ban forced Russian carrier Aeroflot to cancel some flights to the United States that would typically fly over Canada.</p> <p>On Sunday, an Aeroflot jet from Miami to Moscow nevertheless entered Canadian airspace.</p> <p>The Canadian air traffic control authority told Reuters that Aeroflot had declared the flight as a “humanitarian” mission, a designation that requires special handling by air traffic control under normal circumstances.</p> <p>Transport Canada, the country’s aviation regulator, said on Twitter that it has launched a review of the airspace violation. “We will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action and other measures to prevent future violations,” the agency said.</p> <p>With most of the western world now closed to Russian planes, the country’s commercial aviation sector will be confined largely to domestic services.</p>



	And with Russian airspace closed to them, western airlines will have to fly longer routes to some international destinations that typically fly over the Russian polar region.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 CDC: vax protection wanes in adolescents</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine#vaccine-protection-against-moderate-illness-waned-among-adolescents-new-cdc-data-suggest">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/01/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine#vaccine-protection-against-moderate-illness-waned-among-adolescents-new-cdc-data-suggest</a>
GIST	<p>Five months after immunization, two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine appeared to offer virtually no defense against moderate illness caused by the Omicron variant — as measured by visits to emergency departments and urgent care clinics — among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years, according to <a href="#">data published on Tuesday</a> by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>But booster shots dramatically increased the protection, lending support to the agency’s recommendation of booster shots for everyone 12 and older.</p> <p>The findings must be interpreted with caution. The agency’s study did not exclude unvaccinated adolescents who had some immunity from a prior infection, which may have made vaccination seem less effective than it was.</p> <p>And the researchers offered only limited data on hospitalizations, a more reliable proxy for severe disease than emergency room and urgent care visits.</p> <p>“One limitation of this data is that parents may bring their children to an urgent care or emergency department for a variety of reasons, and vaccine effectiveness by immunocompromised status, underlying health status, or vaccine product have not yet been examined,” the C.D.C. said in a statement.</p> <p>Several studies have shown that even though vaccine efficacy against infection wanes over time, the immune response <a href="#">remains highly protective</a> against hospitalization and death, even against the highly contagious Omicron variant.</p> <p>A separate analysis of data from 29 jurisdictions posted on the C.D.C.’s website reported nine Covid-associated deaths among vaccinated children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 between early April 2021 and Jan. 2022, compared with 121 deaths in unvaccinated children of those ages.</p> <p>Still, the findings suggest that scientists must carefully monitor the vaccine’s performance over time in children and adolescents, bearing in mind that boosters may be needed.</p> <p>“We need to see more of these studies to see if this is consistent,” said Deepta Bhattacharya, an immunologist at the University of Arizona. “But I do think it’s likely, and we should be prepared as parents, that it’s going to take another shot.”</p> <p>The results take on particular import for parents as school districts nationwide consider ending mask mandates. The C.D.C. last week published new guidance suggesting that about 70 percent of Americans can safely drop their masks in public indoor spaces.</p> <p>Vaccine uptake among young children has been slow; fewer than one in four children aged 5 to 11 are now fully vaccinated. More than half of adolescents 12 to 17 have been fully vaccinated, with two shots, and about 12 percent have received a third booster dose.</p> <p>The findings follow data published on Monday showing that two doses offered <a href="#">little protection against infection</a> with the Omicron variant in children aged 5 to 11 after just one month. The vaccine has been shown to offer diminishing protection against infection even in adults, particularly against the Omicron variant. New data <a href="#">published by the C.D.C.</a> on its website reflect this trend.</p>

In the new study, the researchers analyzed data on 39,217 visits to emergency departments and urgent care clinics and 1,699 hospitalizations among children aged 5 to 17 years in 10 states, from Apr. 9, 2021, to Jan. 29, 2022.

In children aged 5 to 11, the vaccine's ability to prevent moderate illness dropped to 46 percent about two months after full vaccination (two weeks after the second shot). Most of the visits to emergency rooms and urgent care clinics occurred during the Omicron surge, when older children and adults also were more vulnerable than they had been earlier in the pandemic.

The vaccine's effectiveness against moderate illness in adolescents held steady during the Delta era. But 150 days after full vaccination, effectiveness dropped sharply to 38 percent in adolescents aged 12 to 15 years, and to 46 percent in those aged 16 and 17 years.

When the researchers analyzed data specifically for protection in the Omicron era, protection against moderate illness all but disappeared in adolescents who had been vaccinated more than 150 days earlier. But a third vaccine dose restored effectiveness to 81 percent.

The findings are consistent with those from studies of adults showing that the vaccine's effectiveness against infection and mild illness declined sharply over time, particularly after the arrival of the Omicron variant.

Effectiveness is a comparison between protection in vaccinated and unvaccinated groups of people. But as more of the population gains immunity through infection, it becomes harder to gain a true picture of vaccine effectiveness, said Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and an adviser to the Food and Drug Administration.

"Are we comparing apples to apples when we say that the vaccine efficacy is going down?" he said.

Protection against severe illness was still harder to parse. There were too few hospitalizations in the younger children to draw firm conclusions. Among adolescents who had been vaccinated more than 150 days earlier, effectiveness against severe illness remained strong, at 70 percent or higher.

But most of those hospitalizations occurred during the Delta era, so the data do not provide a window into the effectiveness against hospitalization as the Omicron variant arrived and spread.

The C.D.C. recommends booster shots for Americans aged 12 and older. Pfizer and BioNTech are evaluating the benefit of a third dose in younger children.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Cultural backlash intensifies against Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/cultural-backlash-intensifies-against-russia-over-invasion/">https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/cultural-backlash-intensifies-against-russia-over-invasion/</a>
GIST	<p>ROME (AP) — The cultural backlash against Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensified Tuesday as the Cannes Film Festival said no Russian delegations would be welcome this year and the Venice festival announced free screenings of a film about the 2014 conflict in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.</p> <p>The announcements by Europe's two premier film festivals came on the heels of other high-profile protests in the arts, including Hollywood's decision to pull films scheduled for release in Russia and the Munich Philharmonic's decision to fire chief conductor Valery Gergiev. The orchestra, joined by other orchestras and festivals linked to Gergiev, cited his support for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his refusal to reject the invasion.</p> <p>Cannes, which is scheduled for May, is the most global of film festivals and its international village of flag-waving pavilions annually hosts more than 80 countries from around the world.</p>

In a statement, festival organizers said the ban on any official Russian delegation or individuals linked to the Kremlin would remain “unless the war of assault ends in conditions that will satisfy the Ukrainian people.”

The festival didn’t rule out accepting films from Russia. In recent years, Cannes has showcased films from filmmakers like Kirill Serebrennikov, even though the director hasn’t been unable to attend. Serebrennikov is under a three-year travel ban after being accused of embezzlement by the Russian government in a case that was protested by the Russian artistic community and in Europe.

Hollywood continued pulling its films out of Russian theaters. After the Walt Disney Co., Warner Bros. and Sony announced they would halt distributing films in Russia, including Warner’s highly anticipated “The Batman,” Paramount Pictures announced likewise on Tuesday. That includes upcoming releases like “Sonic the Hedgehog 2” and “The Lost City.”

The Venice Film Festival, meanwhile, said it was organizing free screenings of the film “Reflection,” about the conflict in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region as a sign of solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The screenings are scheduled for next week in Rome, Milan and Venice.

The film, which was presented in competition at Venice last year, tells the story of a Ukrainian surgeon who is taken prisoner by Russia during the Donbas conflict in eastern Ukraine. In 2014, Russia threw its weight behind an insurgency in the mostly Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine region known as Donbas, where Russia-backed rebels seized government buildings and proclaimed the creation of “people’s republics.”

“Reflection” shows the horrors of war as well as the surgeon’s efforts to rebuild relationships after he was freed.

It was directed by Ukrainian director Valentyn Vasyanovych, whose film “Atlantis” in 2019 was also set in eastern Ukraine and dealt with similar issues of war and trauma. “Atlantis” won the Best Film award in the experimental Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival 2019 and was Ukraine’s candidate for the Oscars.

Earlier this week, the art exhibition of the Venice Biennale, of which the annual film festival is a part, announced the curator and artists of Russia’s pavillion had quit their positions to protest the war in Ukraine.

Last week, the European Broadcasting Union announced Russia would not be allowed to enter an act for this year’s Eurovision Song Contest, to be held in Turin in May.

The 2016 winner of the Eurovision contest was Ukrainian singer Jamala, who won with a song about the 1944 deportations of Crimean Tatars by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. On Tuesday, it emerged that she had fled Ukraine for Turkey with her own two children.

A Crimean Tatar, Jamala told reporters in Istanbul that she never imagined that she would end up sharing the same fate as her grandmother, who she said “had just 15 minutes to pack” during the forced deportations of 1944.

The singer said she left Kyiv for Ternopil, in western Ukraine, where she thought her family would be safe, but decided to cross into Romania when she woke up to the sound of explosions there too. Her husband, like all men aged 18-to-60, remained in Ukraine.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Hospital leaders: continue to mask indoors
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/hospital-leaders-encourage-indoor-masking-even-after-wa-mandates-end-march-12/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/hospital-leaders-encourage-indoor-masking-even-after-wa-mandates-end-march-12/</a>
GIST	<p>COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations continue to trend down throughout Washington state, giving hospitals some more breathing room as the omicron surge subsides.</p> <p>But hospital leaders have concerns about the approaching end to statewide masking requirements and are encouraging people to mask indoors even after mandates lift.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee and public health officials on Monday sped up the timeline for the end of indoor masking requirements — to March 12.</p> <p>“Until we have a few more months of really low cases and things are more certain, we ask that this practice be continued in a pragmatic way,” said Taya Briley, vice president of the Washington State Hospital Association, during a Tuesday news conference. “It’s an easy and compassionate thing to do.”</p> <p>Although hospitalizations are also decreasing throughout the UW Medicine system, Dr. Santiago Neme, clinical associate professor of medicine and infectious diseases at UW Medicine, said Tuesday that universal masking will still be required in the health care system’s hospital settings for patients, staffers and visitors.</p> <p>He also encouraged people to continue masking indoors even after the mandate lifts.</p> <p>“It’s not only my risk, it’s the risk of my community and we need to address that with empathy and with the understanding we have a pretty significant amount of folks who although they’ve been vaccinated and boosted, they’re still immunocompromised and their response to the vaccine is not as robust,” Neme said. “It’s a little ask of all of us to really continue to do these measures.”</p> <p>Several COVID trends, including average hospitalizations and infection rates, are looking better, Briley said.</p> <p>As of Tuesday, the state counted an average of 960 COVID hospitalizations within the past week, compared to the prior week’s average of about 1,248 hospitalizations — about a 23% decrease, Briley said.</p> <p>An average of 62 patients per week were on ventilators, about a 31% decrease compared to the prior week’s average, she added.</p> <p>About 10 to 15 Washingtonians continue to die of COVID per day.</p> <p>“Things are overall moving in the right direction — however, we do have a couple of counties that continue to be a little harder hit than others,” she said, referring to King, Pierce and Spokane counties.</p> <p>The state has also been bringing long-term care beds into hospitals over the past few weeks, which has helped clear space out, though the hospital association continues to work on easing criteria for using the extra beds, she said.</p> <p>As hospital capacity improves, health care systems are working to get delayed procedures back on schedule, Briley said.</p> <p>“We both understand the desire to resume a more normal way of living with COVID, and have some concerns about what (the end of masking requirements) could mean if COVID trends increase again,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/01 MLB cancels opening day
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/mlb/mlb-extends-deadline-to-salvage-openers-to-5-p-m-tuesday/">https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/mlb/mlb-extends-deadline-to-salvage-openers-to-5-p-m-tuesday/</a>
GIST	<p>JUPITER, Fla. (AP) — Major League Baseball’s financial fight cost regular-season games for the first time in 27 years when often acrimonious talks to end a management lockout collapsed Tuesday and Commissioner Rob Manfred scrapped March 31 openers.</p> <p>With owners and players unable to agree on a contract to replace the collective bargaining agreement that expired Dec. 1, Manfred canceled the first two series for each of the 30 teams, cutting each club’s schedule from 162 games to likely 156 at most. A total of 91 games were erased.</p> <p>“We exhausted every possibility of reaching an agreement before the cancellation of games,” Manfred said during a news conference in the left-field corner of Roger Dean Stadium as fans outside the spring training home of the Miami Marlins and St. Louis Cardinals chanted: “We want baseball!”</p> <p>Five miles away and 90 minutes later, the players’ association held its own news conference at a hotel, with union head Tony Clark and chief negotiator Bruce Meyer flanked by pitchers Max Scherzer and Andrew Miller — both members of the union’s eight-man executive subcommittee — and Noah Syndergaard seated among about a dozen players in the audience.</p> <p>“This has been making in the years, seeing things that have happened over the course specifically of this last CBA,” Scherzer said, “things that have happened to different players in certain situations, that we absolutely have to have corrections.”</p> <p>Manfred vowed players will not receive salary or major league service for games missed, exacerbating already visceral anger of the roughly 1,200 players locked into a contest of will against 30 controlling owners. Manfred maintained daily interleague play made rescheduling impossible.</p> <p>“To say they won’t reschedule games if games are canceled or they won’t pay players for those games that are canceled is solely their position,” Meyer said. “We would have a different position.”</p> <p>Talks that began last April went nowhere, and MLB locked out players Dec. 2 in the sport’s first work stoppage since 1995. There were just six economic negotiating sessions over the next 2 1/2 months in New York, but more intensive talks began Feb. 21 in Florida.</p> <p>After 13 negotiating sessions over 16 1/2 hours Monday, the sides recessed at 2:30 a.m. having made progress but still far apart on key economic issues.</p> <p>Tone changed with the daylight, and the league sent the players what it termed a “best offer” on the ninth straight day of talks. The union held a Zoom call of 30-40 players and reacted angrily with a rejection. Both sides said they were leaving town, and there was no date scheduled for bargaining to resume.</p> <p>At 5:07 p.m. of the lockout’s 90th day, Manfred declared the opposite of play ball!</p> <p>“Against that backdrop of growing revenues and record profits for owners of the league,” Clark said, “players seek and deserve nothing more than fundamental fairness.”</p> <p>Baseball’s ninth work stoppage will be the fourth causing regular-season games to be canceled, leaving ballparks quiet from Fenway Park to Dodger Stadium.</p> <p>Caught in the crossfire of the money fight, players said they would only discuss — but not commit to — possible on-field changes that Manfred says are needed, such as pitch clocks and the elimination of defensive shifts. An expanded postseason was another casualty — for now.</p> <p>“Manfred gotta go,” tweeted Chicago Cubs pitcher Marcus Stroman.</p>

The bulk of fan ire on social media was aimed at Manfred, who was spotted practicing his golf swing between bargaining sessions by an Associated Press photographer Tuesday. Others were upset that Manfred was laughing and jovial with reporters at his news conference announcing the cancellation.

“Have no clue how he has the ability to laugh about anything right now,” Los Angeles Angels pitcher Michael Lorenzen tweeted. “Mind is blown.”

Players are angry payrolls decreased by 4% from 2015 through last year and many teams jettisoned a portion of high-priced veteran journeymen in favor of lower-priced youth.

“The game has suffered damage for a while now. ... The game has been manipulated,” Clark said. “The value inherent and how players are respected and viewed has changed. Players have been commoditized, monetized in a way that is really hard to explain.”

Some clubs gave up on competing in the short term to better position themselves for future seasons.

“We have been screaming for years about competition issues,” Miller said.

The sport will be upended by its second shortened season in three years following a 2020 schedule cut to 60 games because of the pandemic. The disruption will create another issue if 15 days are wiped out and stars such as Shohei Ohtani, Pete Alonso, Jake Cronenworth and Jonathan India would be delayed an extra year from free agency.

Players would lose \$20.5 million in salary for each day of the season that is canceled, according to a study by the AP, and the 30 teams would lose large sums that are harder to pin down.

The first 86 games of the 1973 season were canceled by a strike over pension negotiations, the 1981 season was fractured by a 50-day midseason strike over free agency compensation rules that canceled 713 games, and a strike that started in August 1994 over management’s attempt to gain a salary cap canceled the final 669 regular-season games and the World Series. It also led to a three-week delay of the 1995 season, when schedules were cut from 162 games to 144.

The most contentious proposals involve luxury tax thresholds, the size of a new bonus pool for pre-arbitration players and minimum salaries.

MLB proposed raising the tax threshold from \$210 million to \$220 million in each of the next three seasons, \$224 million in 2025 and \$230 million in 2026.

“We have a payroll disparity problem,” Manfred said, “and to weaken the only mechanism in the agreement that’s designed to promote some semblance of competitive balance is just something that I don’t think the club group is prepared to do right now.”

Players asked for \$238 million this year, \$244 million in 2023, \$250 million in 2024, \$256 million in 2025 and \$263 million in 2026.

“We’re seeing it act as a salary cap,” Scherzer said. “The San Diego Padres have the higher payroll than the New York Yankees.”

MLB offered \$25 million annually for a new bonus pool for pre-arbitration players, and the union \$85 million this year, with \$5 million yearly increases.

“There’s dollars to be allocated toward them that would fairly compensate their contributions on the field, more so than what’s on the table,” Scherzer said.

	<p>MLB proposed raising the minimum salary from \$570,500 to \$700,000 this year, with increases of \$10,000 annually, and the union asked for \$725,000 this year, \$745,000 in 2023, \$765,000 in 2024 and increases for 2025 and 2026 based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners.</p> <p>“The last five years have been very difficult years from a revenue perspective for the industry given the pandemic,” Manfred said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Knockoff Native art law renewed criticism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/knockoff-native-art-law-renewed-criticism/281-dce7ef6f-e41a-44b7-9a04-aefd834b34c6">https://www.king5.com/article/news/community/facing-race/knockoff-native-art-law-renewed-criticism/281-dce7ef6f-e41a-44b7-9a04-aefd834b34c6</a>
GIST	<p>SHELTON, Wash. — It's a billion-dollar industry built on ripping off Native American art and design. The sale of knockoff Native artwork is a federal crime but that's not stopping people from making a profit.</p> <p>It's a law many say isn't helping Indigenous artists either.</p> <p>In her Shelton studio, art is a language that speaks to Andrea Wilbur-Sigo, a carver with the Squaxin Tribe. Each nudge, each nick is a dialect.</p> <p>“This is our written language. It's always been told we didn't have a written language. But this is it,” said Wilbur-Sigo. “All of our history is in every one of those art pieces.”</p> <p>From fashion runways to fleece blankets, for decades corporate America has plastered Native American art and design all over their products. But consumers may not know that very little of that mass-produced work is done by real Native artists.</p> <p>“I've been beaten out by quite a few non-Native artists for good jobs,” said Wilbur Sigo. “I would have to say they get better prices than we do.”</p> <p>In 1990, Congress created the <a href="#">Indian Arts and Crafts Act</a> (IACA). Under federal law, if you're selling or representing your work as native, and it's not – you're committing a federal crime. Instead, you have to be honest: by saying the work is “native-inspired” or “native style.”</p> <p><b>Law with no teeth</b></p> <p>“This is a law that does not have the teeth that it should have to protect the legitimate Indian arts and crafts industry,” said Gabe Galinda, a Seattle-based Indigenous rights lawyer.</p> <p>Galinda said that as of 2022 the act is outdated and doesn't include any enforcement measures.</p> <p>“[Enforcement] appears that's what's missing. There has to be some process by which the question is being asked: ‘Are you indigenous? Is your art indigenous?’ And if you say you are and you say it is, can you please show us the proof,” said Galinda.</p> <p>The penalties for misrepresenting “Native” art are steep – a \$250,000 fine and up to five years in prison – but are not enough to stop everyone.</p> <p><b>Washington men charged</b></p> <p>In December, two western Washington men were charged with violating the IACA. Lewis Anthony Rath (aka Tona Rath), 52, and Chris Van Dyke (aka Jerry Witten), 67, are accused of creating and selling work they marketed as Native. Some of the pieces were sold in Seattle's Pike Place Market.</p> <p>“These acts operate to displace indigenous artists, from their craft, from their livelihood, and from the economy that they deserve to have a place in,” said Galinda.</p> <p><b>A multi-million dollar, international business</b></p>



Ripping off Native American artwork is a multi-million dollar business.

In 2016, law enforcement seizures in New Mexico and California uncovered \$35 million in counterfeit art. The U.S. Department of Justice recently charged eight people with smuggling in jewelry that appeared to be Native American, but the items were actually knockoffs smuggled in from the Philippines.

"I think people think it's an easy way just to make some money," said Colleen Echohawk, CEO of Eighth Generation store. "This whole store is about Native people who are inspired and are creating this beautiful art."

Echohawk said she didn't know it, but even here at a shop dedicated to Native American art, they sold a counterfeit item from Rath.

"I was made aware of that. And it was because of that instance that we started collecting tribal identification and ask people to show us, you know, their enrollment cards in their tribe so that we can ensure that the art that we are putting out there is going to go back to the Native community and see prosperity for Native people, Native artists," Echohawk said.

### **Harmful to Native artists**

Back in Wilbur-Sigo's Shelton studio, she said there's another problem with the law. If she or any other Native artist allows a non-Native person to help with the creation of a piece of art, under current law, that work has to be labeled "Native style" or "Native inspired."

"Now you're telling me I have to market my work the same as any other non-Native person?" Wilbur-Sigo said.

Wilbur-Sigo pledged that she "will change this federal law in my lifetime."

She added that she could really use help from her mother, also a carver, but because her mother is not Native, that's not possible.

"We should be able to say it's Native, it's ours. It's cultural, it's spiritual. It comes from the roots we were all born from. And nobody can clip those roots," said Wilbur-Sigo. "The only thing this law does is harm Native people from succeeding, becoming successful, doing exactly what we've always done. Dream bigger."

In a few weeks, Wilbur-Sigo's biggest dream, her latest work, a 21-foot carving of Grandmother Frog, will find a permanent place in downtown Seattle.

"It's our written history and our future and our present," said Wilbur-Sigo. "Without it, we lose a big part of our soul on where we've come from and where we're going."

### **How to spot knockoffs**

If you're in the market for Native artwork, you should ask for proof that the piece was made by a Native artist and is authentic. That could include a bio of the artist and information about their tribal affiliation. Watch out for words like "Native inspired" or "Native style." Those pieces could be made by anyone.

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HEADLINE	03/01 New coronavirus variant in Ontario deer
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/health/coronavirus-variant-deer-ontario.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/health/coronavirus-variant-deer-ontario.html</a>
GIST	<p>Scientists have identified <a href="#">a new, highly mutated version</a> of the coronavirus in white-tailed deer in southwestern Ontario, one that may have been evolving in animals since late 2020.</p> <p>They also found a very similar viral sequence in one person in the area who had close contact with deer, the first evidence of possible deer-to-human transmission of the virus.</p>

“The virus is evolving in deer and diverging in deer away from what we are clearly seeing evolving in humans,” said Samira Mubareka, a virologist at Sunnybrook Research Institute and the University of Toronto and an author of the new paper.

The report has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal, and there is no evidence that the deer lineage is spreading among, or poses any elevated risk to, people. Preliminary laboratory experiments suggest that the lineage is unlikely to evade human antibodies.

But the paper was posted online just days after [another team reported](#) that the Alpha variant may have continued to spread and evolve in Pennsylvania deer even after it disappeared from human populations.

Together, the two studies suggest that the virus may be circulating among deer for extended periods of time, raising the risk that [the animals could become a long-term reservoir](#) of the virus and a source of future variants.

“There’s certainly no need to panic,” said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan who was not involved in either study.

But, he added, “The more hosts you have, the more opportunities the virus has to evolve.”

Previous studies have found that [the virus is widespread](#) in white-tailed deer. Research suggests that humans have repeatedly introduced the virus to deer, which then transmit it to one another. How humans are spreading the virus to deer remains a mystery, and until now, there has been no evidence that the animals are passing it back to humans.

The Canada study was a collaboration involving more than two dozen researchers at institutions across Ontario. The scientists collected nasal swabs and samples of lymph node tissue from 300 white-tailed deer killed by hunters in Ontario between Nov. 1 and Dec. 31, 2021. Six percent of the animals, all from southwestern Ontario, tested positive for the virus, suggesting that they were actively infected when they died.

The researchers sequenced the full viral genomes from five infected deer and found a unique constellation of mutations that had not been previously documented. Overall, 76 mutations — some of which had previously been found in deer, mink and other infected animals — set the lineage apart from the original version of the virus.

The deer samples were most closely related to viral samples taken from human patients in Michigan, not far from southwestern Ontario, in November and December 2020. They were also similar to samples taken from humans and mink in Michigan earlier that fall.

Those findings, as well as the rate at which the virus accumulates mutations, suggest that the new lineage may have diverged from known versions of the virus, and been evolving undetected, since late 2020.

But its precise path is unclear. One possibility is that humans might have passed the virus directly to deer, and the virus then accumulated mutations as it spread among the cervids. Alternately, the lineage may have evolved at least partly in another, intermediate species — perhaps farmed or wild mink — which then somehow transmitted it to deer.

“We don’t have all the pieces in the puzzle,” Dr. Suresh Kuchipudi, a veterinary microbiologist at Penn State, who was not involved in the research, said in an email. “We cannot rule out the involvement of an intermediate host.”

A viral sample collected from one human patient in southwestern Ontario in the fall of 2021 closely matched the deer samples. That person is known to have had “close contact” with deer, the researchers said.

(They could not disclose more details about the nature of this contact for privacy reasons, although Dr. Mubareka noted that people should not worry about incidental, indirect encounters, like simply having a deer wander through their backyard.)

The sample size is tiny, scientists cautioned, and there is no conclusive proof that the person caught the virus from deer. “We don’t have enough information yet to confirm that transmission back to humans,” said Roderick Gagne, a wildlife disease ecologist at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine.

But at the time the human sample was collected, Ontario was sequencing samples of the virus from everyone in the region who tested positive on a P.C.R. test. The researchers did not find any other people who had been infected by similar versions of the virus, making it less likely that it evolved independently in humans.

“Had it been circulating widely in humans, even narrowly in humans, I think we would have picked it up,” Dr. Mubareka said.

There is also no evidence that the person infected with the lineage passed the virus on to anyone else.

And early data suggest that existing vaccines should still be able to protect against the lineage. Antibodies from vaccinated people were able to neutralize pseudoviruses — harmless, nonreplicating viruses — that had been engineered to resemble the deer lineage, the scientists found.

In the second study, scientists from the University of Pennsylvania’s veterinary and medical schools analyzed nasal swabs from 93 deer that died in Pennsylvania in the fall and winter of 2021. Nineteen percent were actively infected with the virus. When the researchers sequenced seven of the samples, they found that five of the deer were infected with the Delta variant, while two were infected with Alpha.

At the time the samples were collected, Delta was widespread among the human residents of the United States, but the Alpha wave that hit Americans in the spring of 2021 had long since faded.

“Alpha seems to be persisting in the white-tailed deer even during the time when it’s not circulating in humans,” said Eman Anis, a microbiologist at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine and an author of the study.

Indeed, the Delta samples in deer were genetically similar to those from humans, suggesting that it had crossed species lines relatively recently. But the two Alpha sequences had diverged more significantly from human lineages. (They were also substantially different from each other, suggesting that the variant had been introduced to the deer population at least twice.)

“The main implication would be that the deer sustain transmission and infections within their populations,” Dr. Gagne, an author of the Pennsylvania study, said. “So that is not just, you know, a spillover event from humans, deer get infected and then it fizzles out.”

Whether these lineages will continue to circulate and evolve in deer is unknown, as is the risk they may pose to humans and other animals.

“Based on current information, I’d say that the risk of wildlife, including deer, spreading the virus to people is low,” said Jeff Bowman, a research scientist at the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry and an author of the Canada paper.

But ongoing surveillance is critical, scientists said. Dr. Mubareka suggested that officials should enhance wastewater screening in Ontario and other nearby regions to look specifically for the deer lineage — and to ensure that it is not becoming more prevalent.

	<p>Experts also urged people to continue to follow guidelines put out by public health agencies, including not feeding deer or other wildlife and wearing gloves while butchering game.</p> <p>“We should also be reducing the biggest reservoir for this virus, which is us,” Dr. Mubareka said, “to make sure we’re not continuously spilling into deer and creating these new lineages.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Taiwanese eye Ukraine; seek self-reliance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/asia/ukraine-taiwan-china-russia.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/world/asia/ukraine-taiwan-china-russia.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Justin Huang, a 23-year-old recent university graduate in Taiwan, has been gripped by news of the crisis, just like many other people around the world. He has pored over reports about Ukrainians signing up for the military and scrutinized video footage of Russian missiles hitting residential buildings. He has been deeply disturbed by Russia’s brazen disregard for global norms.</p> <p>But for Mr. Huang and many Taiwanese, Russia’s assault is hitting especially close to home.</p> <p>The self-governed island democracy has long faced the threat of being absorbed by the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing, which has vowed to do so by force if it deems necessary. As Taiwanese watch Russian troops pour into Ukraine, their unease about their island’s own future is growing. The courage of Ukrainians, as well as the harsh reality of that country’s lonely battle, has driven a greater sense of urgency among many Taiwanese to step up the island’s defenses.</p> <p>“Reading the news has been a bit traumatic emotionally,” Mr. Huang said. Moved by a sense of solidarity with Ukraine, he and around 200 other people protested on Saturday outside Russia’s de facto embassy in Taipei. He said he feared that the invasion of Ukraine could be the “tipping point” in the world order, ushering in a new era in which autocrats could act with impunity.</p> <p>“I can see how, after the crisis in Ukraine, it’s possible that China could find some reason to invade Taiwan in the near future,” he said.</p> <p>Taiwan’s parallels with Ukraine are evident to many on this island of 23 million people. Taiwan, like Ukraine, has long lived in the shadow of a large and overbearing neighbor. Both China’s leader, Xi Jinping, and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia have appealed to nationalistic historical narratives to justify their present-day territorial claims. And Mr. Xi has in recent years <a href="#">intensified his warnings to Taiwan</a> not to seek formal independence from China, similar to the ways in which Mr. Putin had threatened to punish Ukraine if it sought to strengthen security ties with the West, for instance by joining NATO.</p> <p>In Taiwan, the invasion has rekindled debates about the probability of a Chinese invasion, the level of Taiwan’s military preparedness and whether the United States is committed to defending the island. Taiwan is more vulnerable than Ukraine, to some extent, because it is not recognized by most countries as a sovereign nation.</p> <p>For days, the slogan “Today, Ukraine, tomorrow, Taiwan!” has ricocheted online. On Taiwan’s news programs and talk shows, some pundits have said that Beijing could take advantage of a distracted West to step up its pressure on Taiwan. Others have expressed concerns that a weak Western response to Russia’s invasion could embolden the Chinese leadership. Still others have said such talk has only created unnecessary anxiety.</p> <p>Regardless of the possible outcomes, many Taiwanese see a need for greater self-reliance.</p>

Dr. Charlie Ma, a 59-year-old physician in Taipei, said that the West's refusal to send troops to help Ukraine fight Russia made him think Taiwan could not count on other countries coming to its defense. If China invaded Taiwan, Dr. Ma said, he would volunteer as a combat medic.

"This is Ukraine's lesson for us: Don't rely on others," he said.

While Beijing now [regularly sends warplanes](#) toward Taiwan, there is no sign that an attack on the island is imminent. Dr. Ma said his biggest concern was that an accident, like a collision of military planes, could inadvertently [start a war](#).

Still, Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, last week ordered the island's armed forces and security personnel to step up surveillance and strengthen defenses, partly to reassure the public.

For Ms. Tsai, drawing comparisons with Ukraine helps bring world attention to Taiwanese concerns about Beijing's aggression, but leaning too heavily on that narrative risks stirring panic at home.

Ms. Tsai has said that Taiwan empathizes with Ukraine and pointed to that country's continuing resistance as evidence of strength in unity.

"We all see the people of Ukraine come together to fight against the invasion by a powerful country," Ms. Tsai said on Monday. She was speaking at a ceremony commemorating one of the most painful chapters of Taiwan's modern history: a [popular uprising in 1947](#) in Taiwan that was crushed by Nationalist soldiers, who killed tens of thousands of people.

But she and other voices in Taiwan have also taken pains to emphasize that the situations are significantly different.

Unlike Ukraine, which has a land border with Russia, Taiwan is separated from mainland China by a wide body of water, making an invasion more difficult. The world, including China, also has much to benefit from a stable Taiwan, which is a key node in the global economy.

In the face of growing belligerence from Beijing, Ms. Tsai's government has highlighted the United States' efforts to [bolster its presence](#) in Asia and its unofficial ties with Taiwan. On Monday, the Biden administration sought to demonstrate support for Taiwan in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine by sending a delegation of former senior defense and security officials to the island.

Still, many in Taiwan are aware that even as the United States provides political and military support, it has [long avoided](#) explicitly committing to defend Taiwan in the event of an attack by China. Some people have pointed to the [reports](#) of Ukrainian civilians standing in line for Kalashnikovs and volunteering to donate blood, urging Taiwan to invest in its nascent civil defense.

In recent years, grass-roots programs have sprung up to teach citizens first aid skills and situational awareness, like how to locate the closest bomb shelter. Last week, one of those programs, Kuma Academy, posted on its Facebook account a flier for a two-day camp that was billed as an opportunity to build knowledge of modern warfare concepts and learn essential self-defense strategies.

"Of course, the situation in Ukraine cannot be directly compared to that of Taiwan," the camp's organizers wrote in the accompanying post. "But the situation of the Taiwan Strait is such that we cannot let our guard down, and we must use this time of peace to prepare for the worst."

Other citizens of Taiwan have drawn a far different message from Russia's invasion, seeing it as horrific evidence that a powerful country's limits should not be tested. They say that rather than lean on the United States, Ms. Tsai's government should work to improve relations with Beijing to avoid a war.

For Tu Dong-siang, a 58-year-old retiree, the war in Ukraine reminded her of growing up in Matsu, part of a chain of Taiwan-controlled islands near China's coast that was frequently shelled by mainland troops

until the 1970s. Ms. Tu recalled the terror she often felt as a young girl, running with her family for cover in their local bomb shelter, sometimes while still carrying her dinner bowl.

“We know how horrific war can be,” said Ms. Tu, who now lives in New Taipei City. “That’s why I think for Ukraine, and for Taiwan, being able to live is the most important.”

And even as ties between Taiwan and China have deteriorated in recent years, some pockets of the island still retain strong familial ties with the mainland, which make the notion of going to war unfathomable.

Ms. Tu’s son, Rick Hsieh, 26, said that while he had just completed the military service required of all Taiwanese men, he had no desire to fight China. Mr. Hsieh said that unlike many of his peers, he felt an affinity with the mainland, where he still had relatives. He was even open to the idea of unification.

“Of course, I know there might be limits to freedom of speech, but overall I don’t think being absorbed by China would be that bad,” said Mr. Hsieh, a poet who works at a cafe in New Taipei City.

For many others in Taiwan, though, the war in Ukraine has only reinforced their embrace of the island’s democratic values.

At Saturday’s antiwar rally in Taipei, demonstrators hoisted signs with slogans such as “Ukraine is not alone” and “Taiwan stands with Ukraine!” Hours later, buildings around Taiwan, including the iconic Taipei 101 skyscraper not far from the protest, were lit with the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag in a show of solidarity.

“In the end, Taiwan’s situation is not that different from Ukraine’s,” said Lillian Lin, a 50-year-old stay-at-home mother, who attended the rally with her husband and 9-year-old daughter.

“To be honest, a dictator is a dictator, and the decisions they make are basically the same.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Covid left Washington roads a trashy mess</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article258900043.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article258900043.html</a>
GIST	<p>Complaints are at an all-time high as streets, highways and other areas are littered with trash, according to the Washington State Department of Ecology.</p> <p>Steven Williams, a solid waste manager with the state’s Department of Ecology, says litter complaints this winter have been plentiful.</p> <p>“We don’t know if people are littering more, but in both 2020 and 2021, there have been far fewer resources removing litter from state roads because of the COVID-19 pandemic.”</p> <p>According to Williams, across Washington state litter pickup programs have been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, programs such as Ecology’s summer teen litter cleanup programs, state and county correctional crews and WSDOT’s commercial and volunteer adopt-a-highway programs were suspended for periods of both years, along with other programs.</p> <p>“This has a cumulative impact of a lot more litter on state roads currently,” Williams said.</p> <p>Thankfully, these programs are scheduled to come back and help keep Washington clean once again.</p> <p>Williams says that twelve Ecology adult cleanup crews will be starting back up in March, each with 3 to 4 crew members per crew.</p> <p>Ecology’s other programs are also scheduled to return in 2022.</p>

These litter cleanup crews are only part of Ecology's ongoing efforts against litter, as they launched two new litter prevention campaigns last spring, and Williams says another prevention campaign is planned to launch in 2022.

Ecology's We Keep WA Litter Free Campaign encourages citizens to stop littering at the source by practicing easy habits such as keeping a bag for garbage in your car, securing all items in or on your car, encouraging others not to litter and more. According to the campaign's website, littering can lead to expensive clean-ups, dangerous road conditions and environmental impacts.

"Every year, Washington's state and local governments spend millions of dollars to clean up litter, but those efforts only remove a fraction of the 18 million pounds of waste that accumulate every year on our roads, in our communities and throughout our natural habitats."

Ecology's Secure Your Load for Safer Roads Campaign also encourages citizens not to litter by providing a source of information of how to correctly secure items on top of cars, in trucks, or trailers in order to not lose anything on the road. Unsecured items cause over 300 car crashes every year and up to 40% of roadside litter in Washington, the website states.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Court strikes down WA capital gains tax</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/douglas-county-court-strikes-down-washington-states-new-capital-gains-tax/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/douglas-county-court-strikes-down-washington-states-new-capital-gains-tax/</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — A Douglas County Superior Court judge Tuesday struck down Washington's new tax on capital gains, an initial blow to a major progressive victory that is expected to ultimately wind up before the state Supreme Court.</p> <p>In a written order, Douglas County Superior Court Judge Brian Huber wrote that the tax, among other things, violated the state constitution's uniformity requirement for taxes.</p> <p>"It violates the uniformity requirement by imposing a 7% tax on an individual's long-term capital gains exceeding \$250,000," Huber wrote, but imposes "zero tax on capital gains below that \$250,000 threshold."</p> <p>Huber — who was appointed by Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee in 2019 — also rejected the argument by Democratic lawmakers and others that the new law is an excise tax, rather than an income tax.</p> <p>Excise taxes have been considered constitutionally sound, whereas the state Supreme Court has rejected taxes on income as unconstitutional.</p> <p>The new law is "properly characterized as an income tax," he wrote, and should also be considered a tax on property.</p> <p>Huber's ruling comes after a Feb. 4 court hearing of legal challenges that were consolidated into a single case against the state.</p> <p>The plaintiffs — which include owners of farmland and the Washington Farm Bureau — argued that the new law imposes among other things a tax on income. In that case, the new law could violate the state constitution, which holds that taxes are to be applied uniformly across the same classes of property.</p> <p>In a statement Tuesday, the Opportunity for All Coalition, which has advocated against the capital gains tax, applauded the ruling.</p> <p>"Judge Huber saw through the state's attempt to enact this illegal capital gains income tax under the guise of an excise tax," said Collin Hathaway, the organization's president, in prepared remarks.</p>



In a statement Tuesday, state Attorney General Bob Ferguson said he disagreed with the ruling and vowed to continue defending the law in the appeals process.

“There’s a great deal at stake in this case, including funding for early learning, child care programs, and school construction,” Ferguson said in prepared remarks. “Consequently, we will continue defending this law enacted by the peoples’ representatives in the Legislature.

“All the parties recognize this case will ultimately be decided by the State Supreme Court,” he added. “We respectfully disagree with this ruling, and we will appeal.”

The legal challenge came after Democratic majorities in Olympia in 2021 approved [Senate Bill 5096](#). That legislation — which Inslee signed — created a 7% tax on the profits of sales of assets, such as stocks and bonds, above \$250,000.

A long-sought priority for Democrats who despise Washington’s regressive tax system, the law went into effect in January. The first state tax returns under the law come due in 2023.

The new law exempts a variety of assets, like retirement accounts, sales of real estate, timber, livestock, and certain agricultural properties, as well as [some auto dealerships](#). Also exempted are sales of sole proprietor businesses that have gross revenues as high as \$6 million.

Progressives have long lamented the state’s regressive tax structure, which depends heavily on taxes of sales and businesses. Washington is one of a handful of states without an income tax. Due to that combination, people who make less money [pay a higher share of their income in taxes](#).

In a statement Tuesday, Treasure Mackley, of Invest in WA Now, slammed the ruling.

“By siding with a tiny number of extremely wealthy residents, the lower court is ignoring widespread public support for helping working families find childcare and providing children with the education they need to succeed in life,” wrote Mackley, executive director of the progressive advocacy group.

“Washingtonians also strongly support making the super rich pay their fair share in state taxes because our state is the nation’s worst when it comes to tax fairness — those with the most money pay the least, while those with the least money pay the most,” she added.

The Washington Attorney General’s Office, which is defending the state in court, sought to dismiss the challenges partly because there’s no certainty that the plaintiffs would ever end up paying capital gains taxes themselves.

But in a hearing last September, Huber ruled that the case could move forward.

Both sides — as well as lawmakers — have generally expected appeals no matter the ruling, anticipating the case will eventually wind up before the state Supreme Court.

If those justices uphold the new law, it could still potentially go to the ballot box as an initiative for voters to consider.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Boeing halts support to Russian airlines
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/boeing-suspends-moscow-engineering-center-and-halts-support-to-russian-airlines/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/boeing-suspends-moscow-engineering-center-and-halts-support-to-russian-airlines/</a>
GIST	Late Tuesday Boeing issued a brief statement announcing that it has temporarily suspended major operations in Russia, including at its Moscow Design Center where it employs more than 1,000 engineers.

The U.S. jet maker said it is also suspending parts, maintenance and technical support services for Russian airlines.

Meanwhile, its major engineering design center and its central office in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, which together have about 1,100 employees, have been closed since the first day of the Russian invasion last Thursday.

In addition to weighing its immense business interests in Russia — including a crucial supply of titanium needed to build its airplanes — Boeing points out that the lives of employees are at stake.

“As the conflict continues, our teams are focused on ensuring the safety of our teammates in the region,” the company said in its statement.

The brutality of the invasion of Ukraine has prompted intense condemnation across the world and the imposition of tight economic sanctions. In response, some major businesses have announced they will sever ties with Russian companies.

Oil multinationals BP and Shell, for example, said they will divest their stakes in Russian oil giant Gazprom.

And in Boeing’s world, on Monday, Guillaume Faury, CEO of European jet maker Airbus, went on Twitter to declare that, “The war now raging in Ukraine is a stark reminder that peace, democracy and freedom have been hard earned and need to be defended.”

“We are defending something priceless — our values,” Faury added.

Boeing’s leadership has so far avoided making any similar public statement picking a side in the war. Its move to temporarily close the Moscow center is a much softer message to the Kremlin.

Boeing initially set up the engineering design center there, and later the one in Kyiv, to outsource work to engineers paid much less than their counterparts in the Puget Sound region.

The future of that source of engineering talent is now uncertain.

A Boeing memo to employees on Monday quoted Sergey Kravchenko, president of Boeing Russia who also heads up operations in Ukraine and the former Soviet republics, saying that the top priority is the safety of employees and their families.

“We are One Boeing and have each other’s backs,” Kravchenko said.

However, illustrating the difficulty Boeing’s tight relationship with Russia now brings, Kravchenko, like most important business leaders in Russia, operates with the imprimatur of the Kremlin. His company bio points out that in 2013, “Kravchenko was awarded the Order of Friendship by Russian President Vladimir Putin.”

### **Titanium supply in danger**

In addition to engineering talent, Russia supplies Boeing with a crucial raw material: titanium.

Last November, Russian company VSMPO-AVISMA and Boeing signed an agreement strengthening their joint venture and affirmed that the Russian supplier would “remain the largest titanium supplier for current and future Boeing commercial airplanes.”

Kevin Michaels, founder of AeroDynamic Advisory and an aerospace supply chain expert, said VSMPO supplies about 35% of the titanium used in structural parts of Boeing airframes, in particular for the 787 and 777 widebody aircraft.

Titanium, lightweight and strong, is the metal most compatible with the carbon fiber composite used extensively on the 787 and the forthcoming 777X. It's used for heavy structural parts such as landing gear.

The joint venture in Russia "has a 54,000-ton forging press that makes the main struts for the 787 and 777 landing gear," said Michaels.

If that were cut off by Western sanctions, or by Russian retaliation to sanctions, Michaels said there are only one or two places in the world that would have the capacity to match the VSMPO facility.

However, he said it could take as much as a couple of years under strict regulatory oversight to qualify a new site to make the landing gear parts.

There are three U.S. suppliers of titanium, all smaller than VSMPO: Allegheny Technologies of Pittsburgh; TIMET, or Titanium Metals Corp., of Dallas; and Howmet, also of Pittsburgh. Two sources said Boeing has been quietly issuing requests to those companies to increase supply.

While all three could in principle ramp up capacity, Michaels said adding and training the workers needed to do so will be the limiting factor in today's tight labor market.

The only good news is that the pandemic downturn means demand for these large widebody airplanes is low. And Boeing has a backlog of more than 110 undelivered 787s because of its problems in manufacturing that will provide a delivery buffer if there is a slowdown in building the jets.

Of course, the same constraints that limit Boeing's room to maneuver in Russia also apply to Airbus.

VSMPO is a key supplier of titanium for the Airbus A350 widebody. And Airbus has a joint venture design center in Moscow with Russian partners that employs about 200 Russian engineers.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Seattle to pay SPD retroactive hiring bonus</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-to-pay-220000-in-last-minute-police-dispatcher-hiring-bonuses-authorized-by-durkan/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-to-pay-220000-in-last-minute-police-dispatcher-hiring-bonuses-authorized-by-durkan/</a>
GIST	<p>The Seattle City Council voted Tuesday to retroactively authorize \$220,000 in hiring bonuses sanctioned by former Mayor Jenny Durkan on her way out of office, condemning Durkan's actions and calling for reform.</p> <p>Last month, council members <a href="#">became aware of a last-minute maneuver by Durkan</a> to extend her order offering the bonuses beyond a sunset period set by council, after 5 police officers and 14 9-1-1 dispatchers had been offered the incentives after Jan. 1, when they believed the program had ended.</p> <p>Now, they've voted to pay the amounts pledged to employees.</p> <p>"I don't think it's fair to the employees who have been offered employment or a hiring bonus and it's not fair to this council who was very clear about our intent, both related to policy and the specific provisos with the Seattle Police Department," Councilmember and budget chair Teresa Mosqueda said Tuesday.</p> <p>In October, Durkan issued an emergency order authorizing hiring bonuses of up to \$25,000 for laterally hired and \$10,000 for newly hired officers and dispatchers to the Seattle Police Department and the Community Safety and Communications Center.</p> <p>Council members <a href="#">voted in November</a> to limit the order to \$500,000 and end the bonuses at the end of the year, when Durkan's term ended, making room for an alternative incentive plan for understaffed departments.</p>

"I'm thankful to those who have accepted employment offers and want to serve as public servants to the city of Seattle, but want it to be clear that" the city was trying to have policy conversations around "hiring bonuses for this year," Mosqueda said, citing an effort by Councilmember Lisa Herbold who introduced Tuesday's ordinance.

At the end of her last business day in office, Durkan [sent memos to the CSCC and SPD](#) department heads, instructing them to continue with the bonuses in the new year.

"Based on consultations with legal counsel, it has been concluded that the City Council's actions to limit the emergency order were not effective," Durkan wrote in the memos dated Dec. 30. "Thus, you should continue to hire and implement the terms of the order, until incoming Mayor Harrell or the City Council effectively act extend or alter the terms of the order."

Durkan's memo claimed that council had failed to "endeavor to act" to amend her emergency order within 48 hours of the order's passage, and was nullified.

In [a separate memo](#) the same day, Durkan notified incoming Mayor Bruce Harrell of the decision.

Representatives of the administration said they did not see the memo, sent at 6 p.m. on Dec. 30, and were not made aware of the ongoing bonuses until Herbold raised the issue in late January.

Harrell then immediately ordered both departments to stop offering the incentive.

According to council central staff Deputy Director Aly Pennucci, Durkan's actions were in violation of the council's changes to the emergency order and a 2022 budget proviso that prohibits SPD from spending 2022 salary savings without approval from the council.

With Tuesday's vote, the January bonuses are all retroactively approved and SPD is authorized to spend \$50,000 in salary savings to pay their bonuses.

Councilmembers criticized Durkan's actions on Tuesday, but commended Harrell for working more closely with the council.

"I'm very grateful the Harrell administration is taking a collaborative approach to governing," Herbold said. "It is a relief to have a mayor and an administration that recognizes council's authority."

Councilmember Tammy Morales later added that it was "I look forward to working with a mayor who understands and respects the separation of powers and brings some management experience to the executive branch."

Mosqueda condemned Durkan's actions, calling them "unacceptable." Mosqueda also said she had hoped to amend Tuesday's ordinance to hold Durkan financially responsible for the \$50,000 spent on SPD bonuses, but was advised by central staff that there is no precedent to do so under the current title.

Mosqueda said she would "look for other ways to recoup the expenses, specific to SPD."

A spokesperson for Durkan did not answer specific questions about the memos on Tuesday, but issued a statement defending Durkan's actions.

"Former Mayor Durkan issued the emergency order because last year Seattle City Council failed to take any steps to retain and hire more qualified police officers and Seattle was in the middle of a public safety emergency that has unfortunately continued," the statement reads.

Durkan's spokesperson said legal counsel "confirmed" that council acted outside of the timeframe, later noting that the former mayor consulted the "City Attorney's Office, outside counsel and her own legal counsel" about the matter.

	<p>“Former Mayor Durkan believes hiring and recruitment bonuses are a critical tool to ensure the city can provide basic public safety for 911 calls as SPD works to increase the number of officers,” she wrote. “We continue to lose good officers and a chance at getting the best recruits. Former Mayor Durkan is glad the City Council acted and will follow this short term fix by working with Mayor Harrell on his long term vision for public safety in Seattle.”</p> <p>A report on a potential citywide incentive program is expected to be presented to council in mid-March, according to Herbold.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/02 Recall: Fitbit Ionic smartwatches</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fitbit-recall-ionic-smartwatch-burn-hazard/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fitbit-recall-ionic-smartwatch-burn-hazard/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Fitbit is recalling about 1.7 million Ionic smartwatches sold globally because the fitness product's lithium-ion battery can overheat, posing a burn hazard, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission <a href="#">announced</a> on Wednesday.</p> <p>About 1 million of the recalled smartwatches were sold in the U.S. at retailers including Best Buy, Kohl's and Target, as well as online at Amazon.com and Fitbit.com from September 2017 through December 2021 for between \$200 and \$330 each. Fitbit discontinued production of Ionic in 2020. Another 693,000 were sold internationally, according to the company.</p> <p>The San Francisco-based company has received at least 115 reports in the U.S. and 59 reports internationally of the battery in the watch overheating, with 78 reports of burn injuries in the U.S. and 40 internationally, according to the recall notice. Those injuries include two reports of third-degree burns and four reports of second-degree burns.</p> <p>Consumers were urged to stop using the Ionic smartwatches and to contact Fitbit to receive pre-paid packaging to return the device, for which they'll be refunded \$299, the notice stated. Those returning the Taiwanese-made products will also get a discount code for 40% off other Fitbit devices.</p> <p>The recall involves only the Fitbit Ionic smartwatch, sold with a polyurethane band and a 1.4-inch color LCD screen. The watches came in slate blue/burnt orange, charcoal/smoke gray, blue gray/silver gray and a special edition co-branded with Adidas in ink blue/silver gray.</p> <p>Used to track activity, heart rate and sleep, the recalled watches include the following four model numbers: FB503CPBU, FB503GYBK, FB503WTGY and FB503WTNV.</p> <p>Consumers can call Fitbit toll-free at 888-925-1764 or contact the company online at <a href="https://help.fitbit.com/ionic">help.fitbit.com/ionic</a>. They can also visit <a href="https://www.fitbit.com">www.fitbit.com</a> and click on "product help" at the bottom of the page.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/01 Iran another failed space launch</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/satellite-photos-show-iran-failed-space-launch-83192355">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/satellite-photos-show-iran-failed-space-launch-83192355</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran likely suffered another failed launch of a satellite-carrying rocket in recent days attempting to reinvigorate a program criticized by the West, even as Tehran faces last-minute negotiations with world powers to save its tattered nuclear deal in Vienna.</p> <p>Satellite images from Maxar Technologies seen by The Associated Press show scorch marks at a launch pad at Imam Khomeini Spaceport in Iran's rural Semnan province on Sunday. A rocket stand on the pad appears scorched and damaged, with vehicles surrounding it. An object, possibly part of the gantry, sits near it.</p>

Successful launches typically don't damage rocket gantries because they are lowered prior to takeoff. Iran also usually immediately trumpets launches that reach space on its state-run television channels, and it has a history of not acknowledging failed attempts.

Separate images from Planet Labs PBC suggest the attempted launch likely occurred sometime after Friday. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment, nor did the U.S. military and the White House.

The rocket involved appears to have been Iran's Zuljanah satellite launch vehicle, said Jeffrey Lewis, an expert at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies who first noticed the attempted launch with colleagues.

The gantry apparently damaged in the launch resembled another that was previously used in a successful launch last year of a Zuljanah, named after a horse of Imam Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and a key figure in the Shiite faith who was massacred with his fighters at Karbala in the 7th century.

It remains unclear what could have caused the blast. The first two stages of a Zuljanah are solid fuel, but its final stage is liquid and would have needed to be fueled on the launch pad, Lewis said.

“This just looks like it got interrupted, like something exploded,” Lewis told the AP.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space. The program has seen recent troubles, however. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh program, another satellite-carrying rocket. A separate fire at the Imam Khomeini Spaceport in February 2019 also killed three researchers, authorities said at the time.

The launch pad used in the latest launch remains scarred from an explosion in August 2019 that even drew the attention of then-President Donald Trump. He later tweeted what appeared to be a classified surveillance image of the launch failure.

The successive failures raised suspicion of outside interference in Iran's program, something Trump himself hinted at by tweeting at the time that the U.S. “was not involved in the catastrophic accident.” There's been no evidence offered, however, to show foul play in any of the failures, and space launches remain challenging even for the world's most-successful programs.

Meanwhile, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in April 2020 revealed its own secret space program by successfully launching a satellite into orbit. The head of the U.S. Space Command later dismissed the satellite as “a tumbling webcam in space” that wouldn't provide Iran vital intelligence — though it showed Tehran's ability to successfully get into orbit.

This launch, however, comes as Western diplomats warn time is ticking down to restore Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018, setting the stage for years of tensions and mysterious attacks across the wider Mideast.

President Joe Biden, however, did not mention Iran in his State of the Union speech that largely focused on the Russian war on Ukraine.

The U.S. has alleged Iran's satellite launches defy a U.N. Security Council resolution and has called on Tehran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, previously maintained that its satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component. U.S. intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran abandoned an organized military nuclear program in 2003.

Today, Tehran enriches uranium up to 60% purity — a short technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90% and far greater than the nuclear deal's 3.67% cap. Its stockpile of enriched uranium also continues to grow and international inspectors face challenges in monitoring its advances.

While Iran's former President Hassan Rouhani dialed back the country's space program for fears of alienating the West, new hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi has instead focused on jumpstarting the program. Iran has a series of satellites it plans to launch and Iran's Supreme Council of Space recently met for the first time in 11 years.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 New Zealand protesters set fires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-move-protesters-zealands-parliament-83186940">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-move-protesters-zealands-parliament-83186940</a>
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand -- Thick black smoke billowed across the grounds of New Zealand's Parliament and sirens blared on Wednesday as retreating protesters against coronavirus vaccine mandates set fire to tents, mattresses and chairs.</p> <p>It appeared to be a final act of defiance as police broke up the camp that protesters first set up more than three weeks ago. Police retook control of the Parliament grounds although dozens of protesters remained in nearby streets, some hurling objects at officers. Parliament's once carefully manicured grounds were left scarred, a children's slide in ruins.</p> <p>New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that in planning the operation, police had expected hostility, resistance and violence — but it was another thing entirely to witness it.</p> <p>“I was both angry and also deeply saddened. To see the Parliament — your Parliament, our Parliament — desecrated in that way, and a children's playground destroyed, by a small group of illegal protesters,” Ardern said. “But, as I say, it's not something that will define New Zealand's response to this pandemic.”</p> <p>Earlier, police wearing riot gear and using pepper spray had moved in on hundreds of people who had been occupying the grounds and surrounding streets. Police efforts in the morning focused on the periphery of the protest before turning to the main camp in the afternoon.</p> <p>It was the most significant use of force to date by authorities against the demonstrators. As they retreated in the afternoon, they tossed objects onto several fires, which police doused with water hoses.</p> <p>Protesters said in a statement they were united in wanting mandates dropped and to make their own informed choices regarding their health, free from coercion and punishment. They said the vast majority of protesters had been well-behaved and had chosen to camp as a last resort after other options for dialogue were quashed.</p> <p>The operation began at dawn, when police started telling people over loudspeakers they were trespassing and needed to leave, while officers tore down tents in peripheral areas and a police helicopter circled overhead. Some protesters confronted police and used milk to try and clear their eyes from pepper spray.</p> <p>Police also towed some of the 300 or so cars, vans and trucks that protesters have used to block streets. The convoy was inspired by similar protests in Canada and has sparked other rallies around New Zealand, leading to a more charged political atmosphere.</p> <p>Ardern's security detail has been increased after protesters heckled her at events, including as she was leaving a school visit in Christchurch last week.</p> <p>Police Commissioner Andrew Coster told reporters they had brought in several hundred additional officers from around the country for the operation, which would continue until all the vehicles and tents were gone.</p>



Coster said some protesters had sprayed fire extinguishers and thrown paint at officers as they advanced, and others had used makeshift shields and barricades. He said a laser pointer was aimed at the police helicopter.

By evening, police reported they had towed about 50 vehicles and another 30 had left. They had arrested 65 people for trespassing, causing damage and carrying weapons. And three officers had been treated at a local hospital for non-life-threatening injuries.

Coster said officers decided to move in because previously constructive talks with protest leaders weren't progressing and many genuine protesters had left and been replaced by people more intent on violent confrontation.

"I was very clear of our approach, which was to de-escalate. There is no interest from anyone here of turning this into a fight," Coster said. "However, this protest has tipped over a balance and it now needs to end."

Ardern on Wednesday said the protest had been fueled by misinformation and conspiracy theories. She also pointed out that COVID-19 had spread at the protest and some protesters had been hospitalized.

Lawmakers across all parties had refused to meet with the protesters.

Last week one protester drove a car toward a police line, narrowly avoiding officers, and police said some of the protesters had thrown human feces at them.

Before Wednesday's operation, police had arrested 132 protesters and laid various charges against some of them.

Protesters have been well organized, setting up tents on the lawns outside Parliament and trucking in portable toilets, crates of donated food, and bales of straw to lay down when the grass turned to mud. They even dug a vegetable garden, set up a day care tent, and assembled makeshift showers as they signaled their intent to stay for a long time.

At one point, Parliament Speaker Trevor Mallard turned on the sprinklers and blasted Barry Manilow tunes in a failed effort to make them leave.

New Zealand is experiencing its biggest outbreak since the pandemic began as the omicron variant spreads. On Wednesday, health authorities reported a record 22,000 new daily cases.

Ardern has said she plans to begin easing virus mandates and restrictions after the peak of the omicron outbreak has passed.

About 77% of New Zealand's population is vaccinated with two doses.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, New Zealand has reported fewer than 100 virus deaths among its population of 5 million, after it imposed strict border controls and lockdowns to eliminate earlier outbreaks.

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HEADLINE	03/02 Russia takes aim at urban areas
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-takes-aim-urban-areas-biden-vows-putin-83197663">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-takes-aim-urban-areas-biden-vows-putin-83197663</a>
GIST	KYIV, Ukraine -- Ukraine's leader decried Russia's escalation of attacks on crowded cities as a blatant terror campaign, while U.S. President Joe Biden warned that if the Russian leader didn't "pay a price" for the invasion, the aggression wouldn't stop with one country.

“Nobody will forgive. Nobody will forget,” Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed after Tuesday’s bloodshed on the central square in Kharkiv, the country’s second-largest city, and the deadly bombing of a TV tower in the capital. He called the attack on the square “frank, undisguised terror” and a war crime.

The assault on Kharkiv continued Wednesday, even as Russia said it would be ready to resume talks with the Ukrainian side in the evening. A Russian strike on the regional police and intelligence headquarters, according to the Ukrainian state emergency service. It said three people were wounded.

The strike blew off the roof of the police building and set the top floor on fire, and pieces of the five-story building were strewn across adjacent streets, according to videos and photos released by the emergency service.

Biden used his first State of the Union address to highlight the resolve of a reinvigorated Western alliance that has worked to rearm the Ukrainian military and adopt tough sanctions, which he said have left Russian President Vladimir Putin “isolated in the world more than he has ever been.”

“Throughout our history we’ve learned this lesson — when dictators do not pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos,” Biden said. “They keep moving. And the costs and threats to America and the world keep rising.”

As Biden spoke, a 40-mile (64-kilometer) convoy of hundreds of Russian tanks and other vehicles advanced slowly on Kyiv, the capital city of nearly 3 million people, in what the West feared was a bid by Putin to topple the government and install a Kremlin-friendly regime.

The invading forces also pressed their assault on other towns and cities, including the strategic ports of Odesa and Mariupol in the south.

As the seventh day of the war dawned Wednesday, Russia found itself increasingly isolated, beset by the sanctions that have thrown its economy into turmoil and left the country practically friendless, apart from a few nations like China, Belarus and North Korea. Leading Russian bank Sberbank announced Wednesday that it is pulling out of European markets amid the tightening Western sanctions.

As fighting raged, the humanitarian situation worsened. Roughly 660,000 people have fled Ukraine, and countless others have taken shelter underground.

The death toll was less clear, with neither Russia nor Ukraine releasing the number of troops lost. The U.N. human rights office said it has recorded 136 civilian deaths, though the actual toll is surely far higher.

One senior Western intelligence official estimated that 5,000 Russian soldiers had been captured or killed in the biggest ground war in Europe since World War II.

Many military experts worry that Russia may be shifting tactics. Moscow’s strategy in Chechnya and Syria was to use artillery and air bombardments to pulverize cities and crush fighters’ resolve.

Britain’s Defense Ministry said it had seen an increase in Russian air and artillery strikes on populated urban areas over the past two days. It also said Kharkiv and Mariupol were encircled by Russian forces and that troops had reportedly moved into the center of a third city, Kherson. Russia’s Defense Ministry said it had seized Kherson, though the claim could not be confirmed.

Ukrainian authorities said five people were killed in the attack on the TV tower near central Kyiv. A TV control room and power substation were hit, and at least some Ukrainian channels briefly stopped broadcasting, officials said.

Zelenskyy’s office reported that the site of the Babi Yar Holocaust memorial, which is adjacent to the TV tower, was also hit. A spokesman for the memorial said a Jewish cemetery at the site, where Nazi

occupiers killed more than 33,000 Jews over two days in 1941, was damaged, but the extent would not be clear until daylight.

Zelenskyy expressed outrage Wednesday at the attack on Babi Yar and concern that other historically significant and religious sites, such as St. Sophia's Cathedral, could be targeted.

"This is beyond humanity. Such missile strike means that for many Russians our Kyiv is absolutely foreign," Zelenskyy said in a speech posted on Facebook. "They have orders to erase our history, our country and all of us."

Russia previously told people living near transmission facilities used by Ukraine's intelligence agency to leave their homes. But Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov claimed Wednesday that the airstrike on the TV tower did not hit any residential buildings. He did not address the reported deaths or the damage to Babi Yar.

In Kharkiv, with a population of about 1.5 million, at least six people were killed when the region's administrative building on Freedom Square was hit with what was believed to be a missile. The Slovenian Foreign Ministry said its consulate in Kharkiv, located in another large building on the square, was destroyed.

The attack on the square — the nucleus of public life in the city — was seen by many Ukrainians as brazen evidence that the Russian invasion wasn't just about hitting military targets but also about breaking their spirit.

The bombardment blew out windows and walls of buildings that ring the square, which was piled high with debris and dust. Inside one building, chunks of plaster were scattered, and doors lay across hallways.

Another Russian airstrike hit a residential area in the city of Zhytomyr. Ukraine's emergency services said Tuesday's strike killed at least two people, burned three homes and broke the windows in a nearby hospital. About 85 miles (140 kilometers) west of Kyiv, Zhytomyr is the home of the elite 95th Air Assault Brigade, which may have been the intended target.

In the southern port city of Mariupol, the mayor said the attacks were relentless.

"They have been flattening us non-stop for 12 hours now," Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying. "We cannot even take the wounded from the streets, from houses and apartments today, since the shelling does not stop."

Boychenko referred to Russia's actions as a "genocide" — using the same word that Putin has used to justify the invasion.

Zelenskyy has mocked Russia's claim that it is going after only military targets, noting that 16 children were killed on Monday.

"Where are the children? What kind of military factories do they work at?" Zelenskyy said.

Human Rights Watch said it documented a cluster bomb attack outside a hospital in Ukraine's east in recent days. Residents also reported the use of such weapons in Kharkiv and Kiyanka village. The Kremlin denied using cluster bombs.

Cluster bombs shoot smaller "bomblets" over a large area, many of which fail to explode until long after they've been dropped. If their use is confirmed, that would represent a new level of brutality in the war.

As the fighting raged, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that a Russian would be ready to resume talks Wednesday evening with Ukrainian officials, a day after Zelenskyy said Russia should stop bombing first.

The first talks between Russia and Ukraine since the invasion were held Monday, but ended with only an agreement to talk again.

Moscow made new threats of escalation Tuesday, days after raising the specter of nuclear war. A top Kremlin official warned that the West's "economic war" against Russia could turn into a "real one."

Inside Russia, a top radio station critical of the Kremlin was taken off the air after authorities threatened to shut it down over its coverage of the invasion. Among other things, the Kremlin is not allowing the fighting to be referred to as an "invasion" or "war."

Ukraine's Defense Ministry said it had evidence that Belarus, a Russian ally, is preparing to send troops into Ukraine. A ministry statement posted early Wednesday on Facebook said the Belarusian troops have been brought into combat readiness and are concentrated close to Ukraine's northern border. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has said his country has no plans to join the fight.

A senior U.S. defense official said that Russia's military progress — including by the massive convoy — has slowed, plagued by logistical and supply problems. Some Russian military columns have run out of gas and food, the official said, and morale has suffered as a result.

Overall, the Russian military has been stalled by fierce resistance on the ground and a surprising inability to completely dominate Ukraine's airspace.

The immense convoy, with vehicles packed together along narrow roads, would seemingly be "a big fat target" for Ukrainian forces, the senior Western intelligence official said on condition of anonymity. But it also showed Russia was comfortable that they wouldn't come attack by air, rocket or missile, the official said.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Russia nuclear drills: subs, missiles</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-holds-drills-nuclear-subs-land-based-missiles-83180974">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-holds-drills-nuclear-subs-land-based-missiles-83180974</a>
GIST	<p>MOSCOW -- Russian nuclear submarines sailed off for drills in the Barents Sea and mobile missile launchers roamed snow forests Tuesday in Siberia after President Vladimir Putin ordered his nation's nuclear forces put on high alert over tensions with the West over the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Russia's Northern Fleet said in a statement that several of its nuclear submarines were involved in exercises designed to "train maneuvering in stormy conditions." It said several warships tasked with protecting northwest Russia's Kola Peninsula, where several naval bases are located, would join the maneuvers.</p> <p>In the Irkutsk region of eastern Siberia, units of the Strategic Missile Forces dispersed Yars intercontinental ballistic missile launchers in forests to practice secret deployment, the Defense Ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>The military didn't say whether the drills were linked to Putin's order on Sunday to put the country's nuclear forces on high alert amid Russia's war in Ukraine. It also was unclear whether the exercises represented a change in the country's normal nuclear training activities or posture.</p> <p>Putin's decree applied to all parts of the Russian nuclear triad, which like in the U.S., consists of nuclear submarines armed with intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-tipped land-based ICBMs and nuclear-capable strategic bombers. The United States and Russia have the two largest nuclear arsenals in the world, by far.</p>

The U.S. said Putin's move unnecessarily escalated an already dangerous conflict, but so far has announced no changes in its nuclear weapons alert level, perhaps in part because it was unclear what the Russian president's order meant in practical terms.

Russia and the U.S. have the land- and submarine-based segments of their strategic nuclear forces on alert and prepared for combat at all times, but nuclear-capable bombers and other aircraft are not. One party raising the nuclear-combat readiness of bombers or ordering more ICBM-carrying submarines to sea would ring alarm bells for another.

Compared to the U.S., Russia relies more heavily on nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are located in silos or mounted on mobile launchers. A change in their readiness status could be more difficult to spot and assess.

Putin's order heightened already soaring tensions, drawing comparisons to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis that saw Moscow and Washington teetering on the brink of a nuclear conflict.

In announcing his decision, Putin cited "aggressive statements" from NATO powers and new, crippling Western sanctions that froze Russia's hard currency reserves, an unprecedented move that threatened to have devastating consequences for the its economy and finances.

The latest statements from Putin and other Russian officials indicated the Kremlin view of Western sanctions as a threat on par with military aggression.

Dmitry Medvedev, a deputy head of Russia's Security Council, responded Tuesday to French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire commenting that the European Union would unleash an all-out economic and financial "war" against Russia.

"Today, some French minister has said that they declared an economic war on Russia," Medvedev, who served as Russia's placeholder president in 2008-2012 when Putin had to shift into the prime minister's post because of term limits. "Watch your tongue, gentlemen! And don't forget that in human history, economic wars quite often turned into real ones."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 NATO Article 5 pull US into the conflict?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/natos-article-pull-us-allies-russia-ukraine-conflict/story?id=83108600">https://abcnews.go.com/International/natos-article-pull-us-allies-russia-ukraine-conflict/story?id=83108600</a>
GIST	<p>President Joe Biden repeatedly has said the United States will not be sending troops to fight Russia in <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, but vowed that the U.S. would <a href="#">defend its NATO allies</a>.</p> <p>"As I made crystal clear, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory with the full force of American power," he reiterated in an address Thursday.</p> <p>The main goal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's founding in 1949 was to foster mutual assistance in response to the Soviet Union's expansion in Europe. A key component of the treaty, Article 5, covers "collective defense," which means that an attack on one ally is considered an attack on all allies.</p> <p>Amid the current crisis, Article 5 could mandate a more direct response from the U.S. and other treaty members if Russian aggression escalates beyond Ukraine.</p> <p>NATO announced last week it launched its response force, a deployment of about 40,000 troops to provide land, air and naval assistance across the alliance. This is the first time the force has been deployed for a "deterrence and defence role," a NATO spokesperson said.</p> <p>Charles Kupchan, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and professor of international affairs at Georgetown University, told ABC News it is possible Article 5 could be invoked while the U.S. and its allies are providing military aid to Ukraine.</p>

"Let's say that Russia succeeds in toppling the government. And it then tries to occupy and pacify Ukraine. Assuming that the U.S. and its allies attempt to get arms to a Ukrainian resistance movement, there's a not insignificant risk that Russia might try to interdict that flow. And that whether by design or by accident, an artillery shell or a missile or a bomb could land in Poland or another NATO country," Kupchan said.

"And then we're looking at the prospect of an attack on NATO territory and the potential trigger of the Article Five collective defense guarantee, which then raises the prospect of potential military conflict between NATO and Russia," Kupchan said.

All participating countries agree to the form of solidarity outlined in the article, making it a key component of the alliance. While Ukraine is not a member of NATO, it borders Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, which are members.

Ukraine has been moving toward the West and away from Russia, attempting to join both NATO and the European Union. Kupchan said its geographical location could be strategic during this conflict.

"In the current moment, Ukraine's border with four NATO countries affords it two important advantages," Kupchan said. "One is refugees are able to seek asylum in NATO countries, and we're seeing hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians head west. And the other is that now that Ukraine's airspace is ... dominated by Russia, the long border between Ukraine and NATO affords an opportunity to continue to funnel weapons and other sources of support to Ukraine."

The first time Article 5 was invoked was after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The alliance had already identified terrorism as a risk affecting its security in 1999. In response to the attack, NATO engaged in the fight against terrorism, launching its first operations outside the Euro-Atlantic area to patrol the skies over the U.S.

In 2008, NATO appeared to open the door for Ukraine's membership saying it would become a member of the alliance, despite a lack of consensus between members, Kupchan said. NATO did not specify a pathway or timeframe for Ukraine to join the alliance.

"In 2008, the Bush administration wanted to proceed with what's called a Membership Action Plan for Ukraine and Georgia. And European partners were reluctant, in part because neither Ukraine nor Georgia was ready to join NATO and because of concern that NATO's enlargement to Georgia and Ukraine would be seen as provocative in Russia," Kupchan said.

"Given the lack of consensus within NATO, the alliance agreed to issue a generic statement that Georgia and Ukraine would become NATO members, but didn't specify a timeframe or a pathway," Kupchan said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin linked the current crisis to Russia's NATO demands, including a guarantee that NATO will stop expanding to the East, in a video address days before Russia invaded Ukraine. Putin accused the U.S. and NATO of ignoring his demands and blamed the West for the Ukraine crisis.

"[Putin] has said explicitly that he wants to see NATO's military presence [reduced] in the eastern flank and that would include the three Baltic countries, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia," Kupchan said. "He wants to see NATO pull its capability back."

"One of the tragic dimensions of this conflict is that the Russians knew full well, that Ukrainian membership in NATO was not under consideration. It was not on the table. And NATO governments were quite explicit about that. Nonetheless, Putin decided to invade the country," Kupchan said.

Its unlikely Putin would launch an attack on a NATO ally because he would be looking at a "full-scale war," he said.

	<p>"My guess is that he understands that this is a non-starter," Kupchan said.</p> <p>In addition to NATO's deployment of its response force, it also said it was deploying a quick response brigade of 3,500 troops that could deploy on short notice while the larger unit gathers its troops from various member nations.</p> <p>"Our measures are and remain preventive, proportionate and non-escalatory," a statement from NATO said last week.</p> <p>Kupchan said it is still unclear how far west Russia will go into Ukraine.</p> <p>"It's conceivable that there could be a rump in Ukraine that Russia does not try to grab hold of and Western Ukraine has generally been much more integrated into Europe, than into Russia," Kupchan said.</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Russia declares cyberwar on US?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/banks-cyberwar-sanctions-financial-sector/2022/03/02/id/1059228/">https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/banks-cyberwar-sanctions-financial-sector/2022/03/02/id/1059228/</a>
GIST	<p>Cyberwar has been declared on the United States, with Russia using preliminary but increasing steps in a campaign to cripple the nation's banking systems and potentially other industries, according to a new report.</p> <p>The United States' major banks, JP Morgan, Bank of America, Citigroup, and Goldman Sachs, are under constant cyberattacks from criminals, usually located in Russia, Iran, or China, but those attacks are intensifying after sanctions were announced over the invasion of Ukraine, business reporter Charles Gasparino reported in The New York Post Tuesday.</p> <p>The bank executives would not comment on the record out of fear that comments would embolden both cybercriminals and Russian government proxies, and referred calls to the Financial Services Information Sharing and Analysis Center, a cybersecurity consortium for the banking industry.</p> <p>"We are in close communication with our member firms and relevant authorities around the world to monitor cyber activity against the financial sector," a group spokesperson told The Post in a statement. "At this time, the sector is not seeing any significant threats attributable to any geographic origin. We continue to actively assess the situation through enhanced monitoring and cross-border threat intelligence sharing across the financial services sector."</p> <p>The Biden administration has been working with the banks for some time to prepare for cyberattacks, and the banks have spent billions of dollars to protect their systems, but the paper's sources say the latest wave is a "subtle but intensified assault" on the banks' technology infrastructure.</p> <p>One big bank executive said the consensus in the industry is that Russia is behind the latest attacks, adding that so far, there have been no real breaches.</p> <p>Press officials from JP Morgan, Citigroup, Bank of America, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley offered no comment on the reports.</p> <p>The financial sector is likely to be better protected than other industries against cyberattacks because it spends billions on the issue, but "other industries are definitely at risk of attack," Herb Lin, a senior research scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, commented to The Post.</p>



	<p>"I think the water utility companies could be a weak spot as they're not known for their cybersecurity," he added.</p> <p>Moscow has denied ties to the criminals behind massive attacks against the Colonial Pipeline and the meat producer JBS, but federal intelligence officials say the hackers have at least some support from Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Anonymous vs. Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/anonymous-vs-russia-hackers-say-space-agency-breached-more-than-1500-websites-hit/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/anonymous-vs-russia-hackers-say-space-agency-breached-more-than-1500-websites-hit/</a>
GIST	<p>A hacking group affiliated with Anonymous claimed that it breached the control center of Russian State Space Corporation "Roscosmos" and cut off the agency's control over its spy satellites as part of the ongoing cyber-offensive against Russian government targets in protest of the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"The Russian Space Agency sure does love their satellite imaging," the group NB65 said in a post early today, posting accompanying screenshots. "Better yet they sure do love their Vehicle Monitoring System. The WSO2 was deleted, credentials were rotated and the server is shut down. Network Battalion isn't going to give you the IP, that would be too easy, now wouldn't it? Have a nice Monday fixing your spying tech. Glory to Ukraine."</p> <p>"We won't stop until you stop dropping bombs, killing civilians and trying to invade," NB65 added. "Go the f*** back to Russia."</p> <p>The same group did a data dump Sunday of more than 40,000 files that they said were swiped from the country's Nuclear Safety Institute (IBRAE). "We don't have the capacity to translate this many Russian documents, so enjoy and let us know what you find," the group said.</p> <p>On Monday, one Anonymous account reported on Twitter that hackers associated with the collective had taken down more than 1,500 websites connected to the Russian and Belarusian governments, state media outlets, major banks and companies over the previous 72 hours.</p> <p>Accounts reporting their hacks under the #OpRussia or #OpKremlin hashtags on Twitter also said the website of the Russian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection had been knocked offline (and was still down this evening).</p> <p>Anonymous also leaked a database that hackers said came from breaching Russia's Ministry of Economic Development.</p> <p>And hackers breached a maritime traffic tracking site to give Russian President Vladimir Putin's yacht "Graceful" a new call sign, ANONYMO, and a new destination, FCKPTN.</p> <p>Anonymous accounts were encouraging those without hacking skills to join Russian social media sites and spread information to counter Russia's disinformation or lack of news about what is really happening in Ukraine.</p> <p>They also countered disinformation that they said was being spread by Russian trolls using fake Anon accounts in order to discredit the Anonymous campaign by claiming that on March 3 the hackers would breach private Russian citizens' bank accounts and send the money to Ukraine. "This is false. Anonymous will not attack the people but the government. Fakes, expect us!" one Anonymous account responded.</p> <p>And hackers also went after the pro-Russia Conti ransomware group, leaking internal chats and files from the group.</p>

The offensive action may have been what prompted this [update on the Conti threat](#) from DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency on Monday, warning stakeholders to not think the threat had abated: "Conti cyber threat actors remain active and reported Conti ransomware attacks against U.S. and international organizations have risen to more than 1,000. Notable attack vectors include Trickbot and Cobalt Strike. While there are no specific or credible cyber threats to the U.S. homeland at this time, CISA, FBI, and NSA encourage organizations to review this advisory and apply the recommended mitigations."

A group called the Belarusian Cyber-Partisans said it hacked railway systems in Minsk, Orsha, and Osipovichy to obstruct Russian military movements toward Ukraine from the country. "The monitoring system of the Belarusian Railway's internal computer network," the group said, displaying a screenshot on Twitter. "An outdated piece of crapware that runs on Windows XP."

The Cyber-Partisans stressed that their railway hack would not endanger civilians: "Manual control mode is enabled, which will slow down the movement of trains but will NOT create emergency situations."

Hackers identifying with the Anonymous collective announced the launch of #OpRussia Thursday (Eastern time), saying that their cyber operations initially briefly took down some websites associated with the Russian government.

The #OpRussia or #OpKremlin hashtags used to announce actions against Russian sites are similar to Anonymous' #OpISIS campaign that targeted the terror group's wave of online propaganda and the #OpKKK campaign that targets white supremacists.

Members of the collective posted a video press release Saturday that vowed "these actions will continue," as "activists will not sit idle as Russian forces kill and murder innocent people trying to defend their homeland."

The hackers acknowledged that "some of our actions may be considered illegal in the eyes of various governments," but they saw "no reason any western laws should be used against our actions in trying to protect and defend the people of Ukraine, and also to help educate the people of Russia."

DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the FBI issued [a joint Cybersecurity Advisory](#) Saturday providing an overview of destructive malware that has been used to target organizations in Ukraine as well as guidance on how organizations can detect and protect their networks. On Wednesday, Russian cyber forces hit the websites of several Ukrainian banks and government departments with a wave of DDoS attacks.

An intelligence brief from the Department of Homeland Security in January [warned](#) stakeholders that Russia "would consider" launching a cyber attack against the United States if the U.S. or NATO respond to Russia's potential invasion of Ukraine in a way that the Kremlin perceived as threatening to Russian security.

The memo also noted that Russia's threshold for directly launching a destructive attack against U.S. critical infrastructure with its cyber arsenal "probably remains very high" though Moscow "continues to target and gain access to critical infrastructure in the United States."

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HEADLINE	03/02 DDoS attackers employ new trick
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/attackers-now-hit-firewalls-to-knock-out-websites/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/attackers-now-hit-firewalls-to-knock-out-websites/</a>
GIST	Distributed denial of service (DDoS) attackers are using a new technique to knock websites offline by targeting vulnerable 'middleboxes', such as firewalls, to amplify junk traffic attacks.

Amplification attacks are nothing new and have helped attackers knock over servers with short bursts of traffic as high as 3.47 Tbps. Microsoft [last year mitigated attacks on this scale that were the result of competition between online-gaming players](#).

But there's a new attack on the horizon. Akamai, a content distribution network firm, says it has seen a recent wave of attacks using "TCP Middlebox Reflection", referring to transmission control protocol (TCP) – [a founding protocol for secured communications on the internet](#) between networked machines. The attacks reached 11 Gbps at 1.5 million packets per second (Mpps), according to Akamai.

The amplification technique was revealed in [a research paper last August](#), which showed that attackers could abuse middleboxes such as firewalls via TCP to magnify denial of service attacks. The paper was from researchers at the University of Maryland and the University of Colorado Boulder.

Most DDoS attacks abuse the User Datagram Protocol (UDP) to amplify packet delivery, generally by sending packets to a server that replies with a larger packet size, which is then forwarded to the attacker's intended target.

The TCP attack takes advantage of network middleboxes that don't comply with the TCP standard. The researchers found hundreds of thousands of IP addresses that could amplify attacks by over 100 times utilizing firewalls and content filtering devices.

So, what was a theoretical attack just eight months ago is now a real and active threat.

"Middlebox DDoS amplification is an entirely new type of TCP reflection/amplification attack that is a risk to the internet. This is the first time we've observed this technique in the wild," [it says in a blogpost](#).

Firewalls and similar middlebox devices from the likes of Cisco, Fortinet, SonicWall and Palo Alto Networks, are key pieces of corporate network infrastructure. Some middleboxes however don't properly validate TCP stream states when enforcing content filtering policies.

"These boxes can be made to respond to out-of-state TCP packets. These responses often include content in their responses meant to "hijack" client browsers in an attempt to prevent users from getting to the blocked content. This broken TCP implementation can in turn be abused to reflect TCP traffic, including data streams, to DDoS victims by attackers," Akamai notes.

Attackers can abuse these boxes by spoofing the source IP address of the intended victim to direct response traffic from the middleboxes.

In TCP, connections use the synchronize (SYN) control flag to exchange key messages for a three-way handshake. The attackers abuse the TCP implementation in some middleboxes that cause them to unexpectedly respond to SYN packet messages. In some cases, Akamai observed that a single SYN packet with a 33-byte payload produced a 2,156-byte response, amplifying its size by 6,533%.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Ransom gangs exploit cloud, remote work</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/research-article/cloud-security/ransomware-gangs-use-cloud-remote-work-to-target-firms-with-43-reporting-attacks-since-2020">https://www.scmagazine.com/research-article/cloud-security/ransomware-gangs-use-cloud-remote-work-to-target-firms-with-43-reporting-attacks-since-2020</a>
GIST	<p>Increased reliance on cloud environments during the last couple of years, particularly as more employees transitioned to remote work, provided an avenue for ransomware gangs to target organizations, according to <a href="#">new research</a> from CyberRisk Alliance Intelligence.</p> <p>The ransomware racket has become complex during that same time period, transitioning from simple malware deployment and extortion to a tiered business model where <a href="#">criminal interests</a> develop and then sell or rent their services. So-called "double extortion" attacks also heighten the risk, where cybercriminals</p>

exfiltrate the data before encryption and ransom demand. All of these developments contribute to a more dire threat to organizations, and considerable targeting among cybercriminals.

Indeed, [new research](#) from CyberRisk Alliance Business Intelligence indicates that ransomware attacks are on the rise. The survey of 300 IT and cybersecurity decision-makers and influencers found that 43% suffered at least one ransomware attack during the past two years. Among them, 58% paid a ransom, 29% found their stolen data on the dark web, and 44% suffered financial losses. Another 37% said they lack an adequate security budget, while 32% believe they're powerless to prevent ransomware attacks because threat actors are too well-funded and sophisticated.

Another eye-popping number: virtually all — 95% — of attacks involved Windows Active Directory. The majority of Windows Active Directory exploits stemmed from a vulnerability (62%), although various other methods, including changed security policies and escalated privileges, were also used.

The growing threat did drive an increase in security resources: Sixty-two percent say they will increase ransomware protection spending.

#### **Where and how the threat lurks**

- Remote workers and cloud platforms/apps were the three most common attack vectors:
- Remote worker endpoint (36%)
- Cloud infrastructure/platform (35%)
- Cloud app (SaaS): 32%
- Trusted third-party (25%)
- DNS (25%)
- Software supply chain provider/vendor (24%)

As far as how the attackers were hitting organizations, exploitable vulnerabilities accounted for the most common initial infection point (63%), followed by privilege escalation (33%), credential exfiltration (32%), and averse mapped shares (27%).

Survey respondents are most concerned about losing access to their organization's sensitive data (70%); stolen data being sold on the dark web (58%); ransomware gangs gaining privileged access and/or controlling directory services (53%).

#### **Security people are worried**

The concerns for ransomware continue to rise: 32% of respondents are moderately concerned while nearly half (49%) are very or extremely concerned.

A large majority (70%) worry most about losing access to their organization's vital/sensitive data, while another 58% worry that their data will be sold on the dark web. Fifty-four percent are concerned that ransomware will gain privileged access or end up controlling directory services.

Other top concerns include regulatory penalties (28%), attackers returning to the organization (25%), legal issues from paying ransoms (20%), and attackers not honoring payoff agreements (17%).

As for the good news: Fifty-four percent of organizations did not experience a ransomware attack in 2020 and 2021. However, those that were targeted suffered quite a bit, with many experiencing multiple ransomware attacks in the past year. Respondents cited the ransomware groups Tycoon (28%), Maze (26%), Quackbot (22%) as the top groups responsible for these attacks.

#### **How do the hackers work?**

The attackers have been exploiting the current work-from-home and cloud computing trends. Thirty-five percent of respondents report that ransomware attacks exploited remote workers. Among the various vectors were cloud infrastructure and platform services (35%), and cloud applications (32%). Other methods, such as DNS, software supply chain, third-party partners, and on-premises endpoints were mentioned.

	Once inside, 63% reported that attackers exploited a vulnerability on another system and moved laterally. Other exploits included privilege escalation (34%), credential exfiltration (32%), and averse- mapped shares (25%).
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Russia-based phishing significant uptick</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/critical-infrastructure/russian-based-phishing-attacks-increased-eight-fold-since-feb-27">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/critical-infrastructure/russian-based-phishing-attacks-increased-eight-fold-since-feb-27</a>
GIST	<p>Email cybersecurity firm Avanan said it has seen a sudden and significant uptick in Russian-based phishing attacks and credential harvesting over the past few days targeting U.S. and European customers.</p> <p>Avanan officials told SC Media they began analyzing the 2 million-plus customer email inboxes they protect for signs of increased Russian phishing shortly after the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) warned on Feb. 16 about an ongoing two-year Russian-led campaign targeting <a href="#">cleared U.S. defense contractors</a> with similar attacks. The sharp increase began on Feb. 27 and is approximately eight times larger than the volume they normally see under baseline conditions.</p> <p>CEO Gil Freidrich said his company typically processes around 100 million customer emails a day. They usually find anywhere between 30 to 50 phishing attacks for every 100,000 emails processed, and normally only a tiny sliver of that activity (about 1%) are credential harvesting attacks. However, Russian-based credential harvesting attacks have jumped dramatically, from about 50 a day to 400 a day since Feb. 27.</p> <p>“We’re still learning the attacks, we want to know if new obfuscation methods are being used, if cyber weapons we’ve never seen before are being used, what happens if you fall victim [to these attacks]. Our team is running that in a sandbox environment and we still don’t have results, but the jump was so big that we felt we needed to release something to warn our customers and our audience,” he said.</p> <p>The activity they’ve seen thus far doesn’t appear to follow the same “spray and pray” strategy normally seen among phishing attacks, and a research blog put out by the company today identified customers in the manufacturing, international shipping and transportation sectors in Europe and the United States as targets. There are also signs of specific organizations being targeted: one unnamed customer, a European-based company owned by a U.S. hedge fund and that has business affiliations in Ukraine, has seen its CEO and entire executive team targeted with such attacks.</p> <p>Customers in other sectors, like state and local government and higher education, are “generally under constant attack” but haven’t seen a similar increase in targeting over the past week.</p> <p>The increase in these phishing attacks would coincide with the beginning days of <a href="#">a Russian-led invasion into neighboring Ukraine</a> that has resulted in severe economic sanctions against the country and its economy. For months, that potential scenario spurred alarm from cybersecurity experts about the potential for retaliatory cyberattacks against the West from Moscow, but Avanan is not attributing the attacks to Russian government or confirming that they are related to ongoing tensions.</p> <p>“We have seen between five to seven clusters [of activity]...there’s no way we can tell if this is government-sponsored or just Russian hackers, but this is exactly the deeper analysis we’re spending time on now,” said Freidrich.</p> <p>The lures used in these emails do not tend to differ from the kinds normally seen in the phishing realm, such as impersonating CEOs or internal employees sending “urgent” documents or <a href="#">spoofed Microsoft 365 emails</a> asking you to click on a link to keep your account active. The main difference Avanan is seeing in the data is “the magnitude, not the methods” of such attacks.</p>

	“I do think or at least suspect we’ll start seeing maybe new methods to bypass Office 365 [protections], said Freidrich. “I wouldn’t be surprised if hackers have kept some of their more sophisticated obfuscation methods for an event like this, and this is really where our analysts are spending their time right now.”
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Cyber, influence operations Ukraine conflict</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cyber-influence-operations-russia/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cyber-influence-operations-russia/</a>
GIST	<p>The extensive use of cyber and information operations in the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict was highlighted by threat intelligence experts during a virtual session organized by Recorded Future.</p> <p>Opening the session, Christopher Ahlberg, co-founder and CEO of Recorded Future, explained that the Russian invasion of Ukraine represents a new type of warfare, which has been “converted into geopolitical and kinetic, cyber and information operations.”</p> <p>Other notable aspects of the conflict are that “it is unfolding in front of us on social media” via platforms like Twitter and TikTok, and the “sheer volume of data” coming out.</p> <p>Craig Terron, global issues team, Insikt Group, part of Recorded Future, provided an overview of the conflict to date. Essentially, the Russian advance has been slower than anticipated, so far failing to capture a city, achieve air superiority and suffering significant losses. This appears to have led to a change in approach by the Russian military, adopting “siege warfare tactics.”</p> <p><b>Cyber Operations</b></p> <p>Cyber-attacks have already played a significant role in the conflict, both before and since the invasion. In the build-up to the invasion, Terron said Insikt observed many attacks that were “aligned with Russia’s strategic objectives.” These involved “undermining the Ukrainian government, intimidating and demoralizing the Ukrainian population, causing confusion and disrupting the everyday lives of Ukrainian citizens.”</p> <p>The principal methods utilized by Russian state-sponsored and nexus threat groups were DDoS attacks, malware, website defacements and fraudulent messaging. Additionally, Terron noted a significant uptick in dark web adverts related to Ukraine in the past three months; for example, the sale of data related to the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>These attacks, which primarily targeted government and critical sectors, such as banking, were highly coordinated. Terron highlighted a simultaneous DDoS and wiper malware attack last week, the day before the invasion began. Based on the timing, “Insikt group assesses that it is likely the attacks were conducted by a Russian state-sponsored or state nexus threat group.” He added that there is evidence the Wiper malware was installed on hundreds of devices in Ukraine in November/December.</p> <p>Terron also discussed the role of the threat group UNC1151, which is believed to be linked to the Belarusian government, an ally of Russia. This included mass phishing attacks targeting Ukrainian military personnel and related individuals, most likely in a bid to discredit and undermine Ukraine.</p> <p>Since the invasion started, Terron said a number of cyber-criminal groups have chosen sides. For example, “the Conti ransomware group announced on their ransomware extortion website that they would support all actions of the Russian government during the invasion of Ukraine, would put in all efforts to resist any cyber-attacks against Russia and would target the critical infrastructure of Russia’s enemies in retaliation for any attacks against Russia.” Notably, a vast trove of its internal chat data was leaked by a Ukrainian researcher following this pronouncement.</p> <p>On the other side, the hacktivist group Anonymous declared “cyber war” against Vladimir Putin’s government following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and appeared to successfully take down several Russian state websites. Terron noted that in response, “Russian government websites have since put in place mitigations against DDoS attacks, including only being accessible to users within Russia.”</p>



"Offensive Russian cyber activity has failed to achieve information superiority"

Overall, "offensive Russian cyber activity has failed to achieve information superiority," according to Terron, observing that "news has continued flowing, open-source researchers and intelligence analysts have continued monitoring Russia's invasion, and the Ukrainian government has still been able to communicate with its citizens and the world, including through social media."

Nevertheless, he expects Russian state-sponsored groups will continue to conduct cyber activities as the conflict expands, including influence operations "to undermine and discredit the Ukrainian government and military."

Terron also believes there is an "even chance" Western organizations will be targeted in retaliation for the West's support of Ukraine and sanctions imposed on Russia. However, currently, both sides are trying to disincentivize one another from conducting cyber-attacks on one another, with Western nations warning Russia of their own offensive cyber capabilities. "Russian and Western governments are in a stand-off, waiting to see who will conduct a cyber-attack first, with cyber-criminal groups offering Russia a potential method of retaliation against the West," commented Terron.

### **Influence Operations**

In the next part of the virtual session, Brian Liston, global issues team Insikt Group, discussed the information/influence operations taking place during the conflict. From the Russian side, this is "looking to create a narrative that this is a conflict of necessity and not a conflict of choice."

In the weeks before the invasion, this message was being promoted to positively shape internal and external audience perceptions towards a Russian offensive against Ukraine, including via intelligence assets inside Ukraine.

This messaging has taken on a range of themes. This included framing Russia as a defensive protector and "putting Ukraine, NATO and the US as the aggressors." Russian media also claimed Russian minorities in Ukraine were subject to human rights violations and labeled "Ukrainians and government collectively as fascists and neo-Nazis."

Since the invasion started, "Russian sources continue to blame the West for its necessity to intervene and its continued supply of lethal weapons, sanctions and other forms of response as an aggressive retaliation."

In addition, Liston observed a significant falsification of events on the ground. A prominent example was a fake telegram from Ukrainian President Zelensky telling his soldiers to lay down their arms and stop resisting Russian troops. He added that "we do know that Russia is heavily underreporting its losses, at least to the Russian public."

He acknowledged that it is highly likely Ukrainian sources are underestimating their own losses in the conflict.

There have also been several instances of deepfakes being created in respect of the conflict. This includes an instance of Vladimir Putin's face being programmed onto the body of a Hitler Youth figure.

Going forward, Liston expects continued Russian influence operations that "look to generate panic among Ukrainians, potentially in an attempt to coerce a change in government."

Looking further ahead, beyond the end of the current conflict, "we anticipate that Russia will look to interfere in the domestic and political affairs of NATO and EU countries, both in retaliation for the West's response to the invasion and then with the broader hope of promoting political leaders and government coalitions that they believe are likely to restore improved relations and sanctions."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/state-bar-california-data-breach/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/state-bar-california-data-breach/</a>
GIST	<p>The State Bar of California has launched an investigation to discover how hundreds of thousands of confidential attorney discipline records were exposed online.</p> <p>The records were discovered on February 24 on a public website that aggregates nationwide court case records. While the full case records were not accessible, data compromised in the incident included case number, file date, case type, case status and respondent and complaining witness names.</p> <p>In a <a href="#">statement</a> released Saturday, the State Bar said that it was taking “urgent action” to address the breach and had notified law enforcement of the incident.</p> <p>Discovered on the website alongside the 260,000 confidential attorney discipline records were approximately 60,000 public State Bar Court case records.</p> <p>The State Bar said that the site “also appears to display confidential court records from other jurisdictions” but did not specify which ones.</p> <p>“It appears that a previously unknown security vulnerability in the Tyler Technologies Odyssey case management portal allowed the nonpublic records to be unintentionally swept up by <a href="#">judyrecords</a> when they attempted to access the public records, using a unique access method,” <a href="#">said</a> the State Bar.</p> <p>“The State Bar is working with Tyler Technologies, the maker of the Odyssey system, to remediate the security vulnerability, which we believe may not be unique to the State Bar’s implementation and could impact other users of Odyssey systems.”</p> <p>Direct contact information was not readily available for the website owner on which the confidential data was exposed. However, the State Bar has contacted the website’s hosting provider and domain name registrar requesting that the confidential data be immediately taken down.</p> <p>“We apologize to anyone who is affected by the website’s unlawful display of nonpublic data,” said Leah Wilson, executive director of the State Bar.</p> <p>“We take our obligations to protect confidential data with the utmost seriousness, and we are doing everything we can to ensure that we resolve this issue quickly and prevent any such breaches from recurring.</p> <p>The State Bar said that as of late Saturday, February 26, all State Bar records, confidential and public, had been removed from the site, with a note confirming this on the site.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Nvidia: hackers stole info, employee data</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/nvidia-admits-hackers-stole/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/nvidia-admits-hackers-stole/</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Nvidia</a> has released more details of an apparent ransomware attack on its networks, admitting that internal data has been taken.</p> <p>The US chip giant <a href="#">had previously</a> given little away, saying only that its “business and commercial activities continue uninterrupted” while it investigated the attack, which was first reported last week.</p> <p>However, a new statement has gone further.</p> <p>“Shortly after discovering the incident, we further hardened our network, engaged cybersecurity incident response experts, and notified law enforcement,” the Nvidia statement revealed.</p>

	<p>“We have no evidence of ransomware being deployed on the Nvidia environment or that this is related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, we are aware that the threat actor took employee credentials and some Nvidia proprietary information from our systems and has begun leaking it online.”</p> <p>The group in question is thought to be the <a href="#">Lapsus ransomware gang</a>, which is claiming to have 1TB of Nvidia data in its possession.</p> <p>According to <a href="#">screenshots</a> on Twitter, the group is also claiming to have “complete silicon, graphics and computer chipset files for all recent Nvidia GPUs,” and threatened to leak information on the company’s Lite Hash Rate (LHR) technology.</p> <p>This was introduced to graphics cards to limit their use in cryptocurrency mining, so any leak of this proprietary tech could have major repercussions in the crypto-mining space, assuming the hackers are not bluffing.</p> <p>There was no word from Nvidia on whether it had “hacked back” at the group following the breach, as Lapsus claimed.</p> <p>The threat actors said Nvidia had used the mobile device management connection used by the group to access an employee VPN, in order to target and encrypt its data. However, they claimed to have offline backups.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Ghostwriter targets NATO refugee effort</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ghostwriter-group-targets-nato/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ghostwriter-group-targets-nato/</a>
GIST	<p>Security researchers have detected a new phishing campaign linked to a notorious disinformation threat group, which is targeting European governments as they try to manage an influx of Ukrainian refugees.</p> <p>First spotted on February 24, the original phishing email was sent using a compromised account belonging to a member of the Ukrainian military, <a href="#">according to Proofpoint</a>.</p> <p>The email itself piggybacked on news of a recent UN Security Council meeting, and contained a malicious XLS macro later determined to deliver the SunSeed malware. The file itself was spoofed to appear as if it contained a recently discovered 'kill list' of Ukrainian figures drawn up by Moscow.</p> <p>The timing also appeared to coincide with Ukrainian CERT warnings of widespread phishing campaigns targeting military personnel and relatives and launched by <a href="#">Belarusian group Ghostwriter</a> (UNC1151/TA445).</p> <p>“The Proofpoint-observed email messages were limited to European governmental entities. The targeted individuals possessed a range of expertise and professional responsibilities. However, there was a clear preference for targeting individuals with responsibilities related to transportation, financial and budget allocation, administration, and population movement within Europe,” <a href="#">Proofpoint</a> explained.</p> <p>“This campaign may represent an attempt to gain intelligence regarding the logistics surrounding the movement of funds, supplies, and people within NATO member countries.”</p> <p>Although Proofpoint said it didn’t have definitive technical evidence linking the campaign to Ghostwriter, it had spotted “several temporal and anecdotal indicators”.</p> <p>It could be that the group is gathering evidence to help craft more narratives about migrants and refugees intended to sow discord across Europe, a tactic it has used before.</p> <p>“TA445, which appears to operate out of Belarus, specifically has a history of engaging in a significant volume of disinformation operations intended to manipulate European sentiment around the movement of refugees within NATO countries,” Proofpoint concluded.</p>

	“These controlled narratives may intend to marshal anti-refugee sentiment within European countries and exacerbate tensions between NATO members, decreasing Western support for the Ukrainian entities involved in armed conflict. This approach is a known factor within the hybrid warfare model employed by the Russian military and by extension that of Belarus.”
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 'Help Ukraine' crypto scams emerge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/help-ukraine-crypto-scams-emerge-as-ukraine-raises-over-37-million/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/help-ukraine-crypto-scams-emerge-as-ukraine-raises-over-37-million/</a>
GIST	<p>Scammers are now targeting unsuspecting users via phishing webpages, forum posts, and email links enticing users to "help Ukraine" by donating cryptocurrency.</p> <p>The development follows Ukraine's successful effort of raising over \$37 million in crypto donations from all around the world amid the country's ongoing invasion by Russian troops.</p> <p><b>'Help Ukraine' crypto donation scams on the rise</b>  This week BleepingComputer has come across a series of cryptocurrency scams enticing users to "help Ukraine" by donating to counterfeit Bitcoin and Ethereum addresses that are not affiliated with the Ukrainian government.</p> <p>To facilitate this phishing campaign, attackers are using a variety of means—from phishing emails that appear to originate from <i>npr.org</i> or the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian (OCHA) domains, to posting forum posts claiming to be behind the "Help Ukraine" movement.</p> <p>Additionally, BleepingComputer came across a forum post shared on one of the forum threads that we have since taken down.</p> <p>"The attack on Ukraine brings a lot of trouble and death in our families! Fundraising to provide targeted assistance to those in need, regardless of their gender, age, citizenship," reads the forum post.</p> <p>"Many people need food and clothes, someone is sleeping on the street!! Remember, every penny and every minute can save a life!"</p> <p>Ransomware intel provider <i>MalwareHunterTeam</i> also <a href="#">came across</a> .org domains set up by scam artists looking to con prospective donors, as did others:  <b>Counterfeit ukraine-donate[.]org domain set up by scammers</b> (BleepingComputer)  <b>More fraudulent donation websites reported by @JCyberSec_</b> (<a href="#">Twitter</a>)</p> <p>Cybersecurity researcher <a href="#">Jake</a> also shared with BleepingComputer a dubious donation site "UkraineGlobalAid.com" that could fool some on a first glance but contains broken links all over...</p> <p>What makes these scams particularly dangerous is their appeal to emotion that unwary recipients may not be able to resist, especially at a moment of need for Ukraine.</p> <p>The fact that the government of Ukraine is actively seeking crypto donations in Bitcoin, Ethereum, and other forms of crypto from all over the world may inadvertently lend credibility to such scams.</p> <p><b>Ukraine raises over \$37 million in crypto donations</b>  In what can be described as the first-ever large-scale crypto crowdfunding effort from a national government, Ukraine has thus far <a href="#">raised over \$37 million</a> in Bitcoin (BTC), Ether (ETH), Tether (USDT), and other altcoins. Additional donations worth \$13 million are expected to arrive as the country battles an ongoing crisis.</p>

Last week, after Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine, the Ukrainian government made a crowdfunding appeal to the world seeking cryptocurrency donations.

In a tweet posted by the official Twitter account of Ukraine, government officials shared the authentic Bitcoin and Ethereum addresses where funds could be sent to...

This may have raised eyebrows among netizens [suspecting](#) if Ukraine's official Twitter account had been hacked—and for good reason.

In 2020, [attackers had hijacked verified Twitter accounts](#) of prominent public figures and companies including Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Kanye West, and Apple, to promote "double your cryptocurrency" scams:

In 2021, Bitcoin.org was hacked with attackers having successfully [stolen \\$17,000 from unwary users](#) in a similar scam.

It's tempting to dismiss these scams thinking no one falls for them, but, similar crypto scams have been hugely successful and generated hundreds of thousands of dollars in the past.

For example, in 2018 crypto [scammers had made \\$180K](#) in a single day. In 2021, Twitter suffered a massive attack with threat actors [walking away with \\$580K](#) in a week. And, in February last year, we saw another incidence of [crypto scammers making at least \\$145,000](#).

However, subsequent tweets [[1](#), [2](#)] from Ukrainian First Vice Prime Minister, Mykhailo Fedorov, have confirmed the government's ask was legitimate.

For those looking to donate to Ukraine, make sure to only use the official wallet addresses [published by the Ukrainian government](#) and refrain from engaging with any suspicious donation emails or social media posts.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Conti ransomware source code leaked
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/conti-ransomware-source-code-leaked-by-ukrainian-researcher/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/conti-ransomware-source-code-leaked-by-ukrainian-researcher/</a>
GIST	<p>A Ukrainian researcher continues to deal devastating blows to the Conti ransomware operation, leaking further internal conversations, as well as the source for their ransomware, administrative panels, and more.</p> <p>It has been quite a damaging week for Conti after they <a href="#">sided with Russia</a> on the invasion of Ukraine and upset Ukrainian adverts (affiliates) and a researcher who has been secretly snooping on their operation.</p> <p>On Sunday, a Ukrainian researcher using the Twitter handle <a href="#">@ContiLeaks</a> leaked 393 JSON files containing <a href="#">over 60,000 internal messages</a> taken from the Conti and Ryuk ransomware gang's private XMPP chat server.</p> <p>These conversations were from January 21st, 2021, through February 27th, 2022, providing a treasure trove of information on the cybercrime organization, such as bitcoin addresses, how the gang is organized as a business, evading law enforcement, how they conduct their attacks, and much more.</p> <p>On Monday, the researcher kept leaking more damaging Conti data, including an additional 148 JSON files containing 107,000 internal messages since June 2020, which is around when the <a href="#">Conti ransomware operation was first launched</a>.</p> <p>ContiLeaks began releasing more data throughout the night, including the source code for the gang's administrative panel, the BazarBackdoor API, screenshots of storage servers, and more.</p> <p>However, a part of the leak that got people excited was a password-protected archive containing the source code for the Conti ransomware encryptor, decryptor, and builder.</p>

While the leaker did not share the password publicly, another researcher soon cracked it, allowing everyone access to the source code for the Conti ransomware malware files.

If you are a reverse engineer, the source code may not provide additional information. However, the source code provides enormous insight into how the malware works for those who can program in C, but not necessarily reverse engineer.

While this is good for security research, the public availability of this code does have its drawbacks. As we saw when the [HiddenTear](#) (for "educational reasons") and [Babuk ransomware source code](#) was released, [threat actors quickly coopt](#) the code to [launch their own operations](#).

With code as tight and clean as the Conti ransomware operation, we should expect other threat actors to attempt to launch their own criminal operations using the leaked source code.

What may be more helpful, though, is the BazarBackdoor APIs and TrickBot command and control server source code that was released, as there is no way to access that info without having access to the threat actor's infrastructure.

As for Conti, we will have to wait and see if this "data breach" has much of an impact on their operation. This has been a significant reputational blow for the group that may cause affiliates to move to another ransomware operation.

But, just like all businesses, and there is no denying Conti is run like a business, data breaches happen all the time.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Phishing abuses Google Ads; push scams
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hundreds-of-ebike-phishing-sites-abuse-google-ads-to-push-scams/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hundreds-of-ebike-phishing-sites-abuse-google-ads-to-push-scams/</a>
GIST	<p>A large-scale campaign involving over 200 phishing and scam sites has tricked users into giving their personal data to fake investments schemes impersonating genuine brands.</p> <p>The fraudulent operation relies upon the abuse of Google Ads and SEO to draw victims to hundreds of fake websites targeting the Indian audience.</p> <p>The campaign was uncovered by Singaporean security firm CloudSEK, which has shared its report exclusively with Bleeping Computer.</p> <p>According to analysts Ankit Dobhal and Aryan Singh, the campaign has caused financial damages of up to \$1,000,000, coming from tens of thousands of victims.</p> <p><b>Taking advantage of state incentives</b> The government in India has recently introduced favorable policies to boost the growth of the country's EV (electric vehicle) sector.</p> <p>These policies are forecasted to bring a growth of 90% (CAGR) for the Indian EV market before the end of the decade, making it <a href="#">a \$200 billion sector</a>.</p> <p>Over 400 EV startups have already launched in the country, while existing automotive companies are also aggressively extending their operations in the emerging field.</p> <p>Scammers have identified these conditions as a fertile ground for trickery, with an explosion of websites attempting to exploit this sudden boom spiking since August 2021 and remaining in large volumes today.</p>

Moreover, CloudSEK reports having identified a shift in the focus of phishing actors during that period, abandoning banking and finance lures in favor of EV themes.

### **The phishing operation**

The threat actors ensure a steady influx of potential victims by abusing Google Ads, stuffing their phony sites with keywords, and mimicking well-known brands such as Revolt and Ather.

In many cases, the malicious actors simply copy the content, style, layout, and all images of the legitimate site and create clones.

In other cases, the scammers are building entirely fictional marketplaces using generic words like "ebike," to supposedly offer products from multiple brands.

Visitors of these websites are instructed to enter their full names, contact numbers, email addresses, and physical address to register on the platforms.

Once they have completed the registration, the scammers ask them to pay the fee required to become an EV dealer or purchase a product on the site.

Unfortunately, the victims are also giving away their banking/payment details to the crooks at this step.

### **A domain-generation industry**

Although the threat analysts discovered 200 active phishing domains, they warn that the swarm is constantly being refreshed, with new sites taking the place of those reported and taken down.

"They (scammers) register a large number of domains and keep some of them parked for use in the future," explains [the CloudSEK report](#).

"Hence, if active domains are reported or taken down, they can use the parked domains to continue running the campaign."

In terms of the impact, the researchers observed between 100 and 200 users registering on these sites per day and estimated the total financial losses to be INR40-80 million (\$500,000 - \$1,000,000).

A list of scam 100 domains [can be seen here](#), while the remainder 100 has not been disclosed at the request of the affected EV dealer, who is mimicked by all of them.

CloudSEK has told Bleeping Computer they have shared the entire phishing domains list with Google to help stop the Ads abuse.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Cyberattacks in Ukraine could spillover</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/cyberattacks-in-ukraine-could-soon-spillover-to-other-countries">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/cyberattacks-in-ukraine-could-soon-spillover-to-other-countries</a>
GIST	<p>Most cyberattacks in Ukraine continue to be planned and highly targeted, but there are some signs that this soon may change.</p> <p>One indication is a new Trojan dubbed FoxBlade, which Microsoft researchers recently discovered on Ukrainian government systems; it would allow attackers to use infected PCs in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks. There is <a href="#">some concern</a> that the operators of the malware will try and infect as many systems as possible with it — both inside and outside Ukraine — to make their DDoS attacks more powerful.</p> <p>Another indication is a sharp increase in phishing attacks out of Russia over the past 24 hours that already have affected some organizations in the US and Europe.</p>



Microsoft president and vice chair Brad Smith mentioned FoxBlade briefly in a broader blog post on the [use and abuse of digital technology in Ukraine](#) on Monday. He described the malware as being used as part of a broader set of "precisely targeted" attacks, unlike in 2017 when NotPetya attacks spread from Ukraine to other countries. Smith offered no description of FoxBlade or potential infection vectors but noted that Microsoft had developed a signature for the threat in three hours and added it to the company's Defender anti-malware service.

A [Microsoft threat intelligence description](#) of the brief, however, described FoxBlade as malware that allows infected systems to be co-opted into DDoS attacks without the system user's knowledge.

Nathan Einwechter, director of security research at Vectra, says he expects systems outside Ukraine will be the predominant targets of FoxBlade infections. "Being able to infect many systems outside of Ukraine allows the attackers to have a greater impact on important targets," he says. "Infected systems within Ukraine are much more likely to be the victim of a ransomware or wiper attack following infection as opposed to the FoxBlade DDoS Trojan."

Also important to consider is who exactly the threat actor might target with its DDoS capabilities. These organizations are likely going to be much more carefully selected entities that the attackers are interested in actively disrupting. Potential targets could include organizations in Ukraine as well as those in [countries that have thrown their support behind Ukraine](#).

"Both of these target types, even outside Ukraine, represent important opportunities to impact the conflict in various ways," Einwechter says. FoxBlade is self-contained, along with a dropper, and is loaded onto systems after some other existing exploit is leveraged, so it is not specifically tied to any given exploit or vulnerability, he adds.

#### Big Surge in Email Attacks Out of Russia

Meanwhile, Avanan reported observing an eightfold increase in email-borne attacks out of Russia in just the past 24 hours, at least some of them targeting manufacturing firms and international shipping and transportation companies in the US and Europe.

Most of the attacks appear designed to gain access to the recipient's email accounts and to induce them to hand over account credentials, [Avanan said](#) Tuesday.

"There does appear to be a larger volume of attacks going after sea shipping companies and auto manufacturers," says Gil Friedrich, CEO of Avanan, a Check Point Security Company. "Some have operations in Ukraine; some don't," he adds.

As one example, he points to an international shipping company that was targeted and whose executives have Ukrainian ties. The actors behind the latest round of attacks appear to be a combination of Russia-based groups engaged in opportunistic attacks and those targeting specific victims, according to Friedrich. In another development, ESET on Tuesday said its researchers had observed a second destructive disk-wiper — this one dubbed IsaacWiper — being used in targeted fashion on systems belonging to a Ukrainian government organization. The security vendor last week had reported finding another disk-wiper called HermeticWiper on systems belonging to several Ukrainian organizations. Both malware tools are designed to overwrite the Master Boot Record (MBR) on Windows systems, making them inoperable after infection and compromise.

In an update Tuesday, [ESET described attacks involving HermeticWiper](#) as starting on Feb. 23, shortly before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. ESET said it had observed HermeticWiper on hundreds of systems belonging to at least five organizations in Ukraine. The attackers appear to have used a malware tool dubbed HermeticWizard to spread the disk-wiping malware across local networks via SMB shares and Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI), ESET said. The company said its researchers had not been able to attribute the malware to any specific actor or country.



	<p>"The two wipers differ quite a bit in their implementation," says Jean-Ian Boutin, head of ESET threat research. "HermeticWiper is more sophisticated than IsaacWiper, but both have the same purpose: They try to corrupt the disk's content and make the system inoperable."</p> <p>Boutin shared Smith's assessment of the attacks on Ukraine so far being targeted. "This is [a] fair assessment," Boutin says. "Based on the capability, appearance, and the selection of targets, the wiper attacks reported by ESET Research were very targeted."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/01 TeaBot Android banking malware spreads</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/03/teabot-android-banking-malware-spreads.html?web_view=true">https://thehackernews.com/2022/03/teabot-android-banking-malware-spreads.html?web_view=true</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>An Android banking trojan designed to steal credentials and SMS messages has been observed once again sneaking past Google Play Store protections to target users of more than 400 banking and financial apps, including those from Russia, China, and the U.S.</p> <p>"TeaBot RAT capabilities are achieved via the device screen's live streaming (requested on-demand) plus the abuse of Accessibility Services for remote interaction and key-logging," Cleafy researchers said in a report. "This enables Threat Actors (TAs) to perform ATO (Account Takeover) directly from the compromised phone, also known as 'On-device fraud.'"</p> <p>Also known by the name Anatsa, TeaBot first emerged in May 2021, camouflaging its malicious functions by posing as seemingly innocuous PDF document and QR code scanner apps that are distributed via the official Google Play Store instead of third-party apps stores or via fraudulent websites.</p> <p>These apps, also known as dropper applications, act as a conduit to deliver a second-stage payload that retrieves the malware strain to take control of the infected devices. In November 2021, Dutch security firm ThreatFabric disclosed that it had identified six Anatsa droppers on the Play Store since June last year.</p> <p>Then earlier this January, Bitdefender researchers identified TeaBot lurking in the official Android app marketplace as a "QR Code Reader - Scanner App," gaining more than 100,000 downloads within a span of a month before it was taken down.</p> <p>The latest version of TeaBot dropper spotted by Cleafy on February 21, 2022, is also a QR code reader app named "QR Code &amp; Barcode - Scanner" which has been downloaded roughly 10,000 times from the Play Store.</p> <p>Once installed the modus operandi is the same: prompt users to accept a fake add-on update, which, in turn, leads to the installation of a second app hosted on GitHub that actually contains the TeaBot malware. It's, however, worth noting that users need to allow installs from unknown sources for this attack chain to be successful.</p> <p>The last phase of the infection involves the banking trojan seeking Accessibility Services permissions to capture sensitive information like login credentials and two-factor authentication codes with the goal of taking over the accounts to carry out on-device fraud.</p> <p>"In less than a year, the number of applications targeted by TeaBot have grown more than 500%, going from 60 targets to over 400," the researchers said, adding the malware now strikes several apps related to personal banking, insurance, crypto wallets, and crypto exchanges.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>03/01 IsaacWiper data wiper targets Ukraine govt.</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/128553/malware/isaacwiper-data-wiper.html?web_view=true">https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/128553/malware/isaacwiper-data-wiper.html?web_view=true</a>
<b>GIST</b>	IsaacWiper, a new data wiper was used against an unnamed Ukrainian government network after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

ESET researchers uncovered a new data wiper, tracked as IsaacWiper, that was used against an unnamed Ukrainian government network after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The wiper was first spotted on February 24 within an organization that was not infected with the [HermeticWiper](#) malware (aka KillDisk.NCV), which infected hundreds of machines in the country on February 23. According to cybersecurity firms [ESET](#) and [Broadcom's Symantec](#) discovered, the infections followed the DDoS attacks against several Ukrainian websites, including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers, and Rada.

IsaacWiper was spotted in the form of either a Windows DLL or EXE with no Authenticode signature;

The oldest PE compilation timestamp discovered by ESET is October 19th, 2021, a circumstance that suggests that the malware might have been used in previous operations months earlier without being detected.

IsaacWiper and HermeticWiper have no code similarities, the former is less sophisticated than the latter.

Once infected a system, IsaacWiper starts by enumerating the physical drives and calls DeviceIoControl with the IOCTL\_IOCTL\_STORAGE\_GET\_DEVICE\_NUMBER to get their device numbers. Then IsaacWiper wipes the first 0x10000 bytes of each disk using the ISAAC pseudorandom generator.

Then the malware enumerates the logical drives and wipes the content of each disk with random bytes also generated by the ISAAC PRNG. Experts pointed out that the malware recursively wipes the files in a single thread, but the process could be time-consuming for large disks.

ESET reported that threat actors on February 25 used the IsaacWiper version with debug logs.

Researchers speculate attackers were unable to wipe some of the targeted machines and used logs to determine which problem took place.

"At this point, we have no indication that other countries were targeted," concludes the analysis published by ESET. "However, due to the current crisis in Ukraine, there is still a risk that the same threat actors will launch further campaigns against countries that back the Ukrainian government or that sanction Russian entities."

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Colorado cryptocurrency tax payments</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/01/colorado-tax-payments-cryptocurrency">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/01/colorado-tax-payments-cryptocurrency</a>
GIST	<p>Colorado is slated to become the first US state to accept tax payments in cryptocurrency, a move the governor's office has described as the "next logical step on the path to digital statehood".</p> <p>Colorado's governor, Jared Polis, who announced the effort last week, explained in a tweet that the state would accept crypto payments converted into a dollar value, which would then be deposited in the state's treasury.</p> <p>In a recent interview with CNBC, Polis said the payments will be processed by an intermediary and that program is expected to start by the summer. Polis said he hopes to expand the program to include other state business such as driver's licenses and hunting licenses.</p> <p>Polis, a former tech entrepreneur, has spoken at crypto conferences, talked to Wired about his ambitions to make Colorado a pioneering state for crypto and even proposed moving the state's cattle brand system onto the blockchain.</p> <p>In a statement to the Guardian, Polis' press secretary, Conor Cahill, called the tax effort the state's "next logical step on the path to digital statehood".</p>

“Governor Polis is proud to lead efforts to create a strong and dynamic crypto ecosystem that puts Colorado at the forefront of digital innovation,” Cahill added, pointing out that the state was the very first to employ a “chief blockchain architect” – one of the numerous parties the governor’s office will be working with to process cryptocurrency for taxes.

There might be some concerns, however. According to CNBC, cryptocurrency is considered “property” by the federal government, which means its owners would have to pay taxes on cryptocurrency itself before it can be used as a method of payment. Cahill did not respond to a specific question about whether this might deter some from using cryptocurrency to pay their taxes.

Polis’s announcement was met with mixed reviews on social media.

“It’s also a fantastic way to contribute to the climate change threatening Colorado’s tourism industry! Great thinking!” one user wrote in response to Polis’s tweet.

“I have yet to comprehend crypto. But about homemade chocolate chip cookies? Will Colorado accept that?” wrote another.

Colorado’s move follows efforts in other states to bring crypto into the mainstream. Wyoming is looking into making sales tax payable through cryptocurrency, while Arizona aims to accept bitcoin as legal tender.

New York City’s mayor, Eric Adams, received his first paycheck in cryptocurrency after starting office in January, keeping with a promise he’d made that he would accept his first three paychecks in bitcoin, in an effort to make New York the “global capital for cryptocurrency”.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Could Russia shut down Ukraine internet?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/could-russia-shut-down-the-internet-in-ukraine">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/could-russia-shut-down-the-internet-in-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine’s continued access to the internet not only supports day-to-day life and the country’s financial system but it is also enabling the coordination of Ukrainian civil resistance – plus the ability of everyone, from the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to ordinary citizens, to communicate with the outside world.</p> <p><b>How much of Ukraine still has access to the internet?</b></p> <p>Ukraine remains largely connected to the internet, especially in major population centres. Mobile networks have struggled under the weight of connections and there have been broadband outages in areas with heavy fighting.</p> <p>But on a national level access to the internet is largely unaffected by the Russian invasion, according to external monitoring organisations.</p> <p>“Ukraine has a diverse internet infrastructure with few choke points – which means it’s difficult to switch off the country and there’s no centralised kill switch,” said Alp Toker of the monitoring organisation NetBlocks.</p> <p>“If an invading nation desired to switch off Ukraine’s internet, this would really be a matter of physically entering internet exchange points and data centres and taking over that infrastructure. And it certainly can’t be done remotely by severing a connection with, say, Russia.”</p> <p>In a bid to boost connectivity, the Ukrainian telecoms regulator has <a href="#">temporarily released spare radio frequencies</a> to mobile phone networks in order to allow them to relieve congestion on their services.</p> <p><b>What is happening to the internet as Russian forces advance?</b></p> <p>Lanet, one of the country’s leading broadband providers, apologised to customers in the eastern Ukrainian city of Sievierodonetsk this weekend because its connection to the area had been destroyed “as a result of combat operations”.</p>

When its users in the city, currently under heavy Russian artillery fire, asked for an update on when their broadband would be reconnected, the company said its technicians could not currently perform repairs “due to active military action on the damage site”.

One customer begged for the service to be fixed, posting on the company’s Facebook page to explain why it matters: “Journalists, correspondents, military for communication and civilians need to know what to do ... we find out everything from Telegram channels and Facebook.”

### **How could Russia shut down the internet in Ukraine?**

In recent years autocratic regimes have increasingly moved to switch off internet connections when faced with uprisings, such as [in Kazakhstan in January](#). Many [African nations have also enforced](#) full or partial internet shutdowns when faced with internal conflict or in the run-up to elections.

Shutting down the internet is relatively easy for an incumbent government. Officials can simply order licensed internet service providers and phone networks to switch off their networks, or risk having their right to operate in the country withdrawn.

What is more difficult is for an invading power to shut down a decentralised commercial telecoms infrastructure, especially if mobile networks and internet service providers refuse to collaborate.

Toker said a targeted Russian hack or a denial of service attack could briefly take out chunks of Ukrainian communications infrastructure but would be relatively easy to mitigate.

This leaves the other scenario where Russian troops physically enter data centres or systematically destroy equipment. “Even then, it might involve coercing staff. It’s the kind of thing that might happen if there’s an attempt to unseat the government. It could well happen to prevent a counterinsurgency.”

### **What has [Elon Musk](#) got to do with all of this?**

The American billionaire owner of Tesla and SpaceX has been developing a satellite internet system called Starlink, which aims to provide reliable global broadband connectivity through thousands of low-Earth orbit satellites.

This would be nearly impossible for Russia to block – but also requires the user to have access to a special piece of equipment.

Following a request from the Ukrainian government, Musk has sent a shipment of these to Kyiv – although it is unlikely that it will be possible to deploy the system at scale.

Rather than aiding the general population, it is more likely to be used strategically – such as ensuring key officials retain independent access to the internet.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Twitter bots track Russian oligarchs jets</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/jack-sweeney-russian-oligarchs-jets">https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/jack-sweeney-russian-oligarchs-jets</a>
GIST	<p>After gaining national attention for launching a <a href="#">Twitter bot</a> that tracks the movements of <a href="#">Elon Musk's</a> private jet, University of Central Florida student Jack Sweeney is at it again – this time going after Russian oligarchs.</p> <p>Sweeney, 19, uses legal websites that track aircraft transponders and his own IT and coding skills to make the bots.</p> <p>Sweeney launched a new account, @RUOligarchJets, on Saturday, which is currently tracking over a dozen jets, including those owned by Russia's wealthiest person, Vladimir Potanin, Chelsea soccer team owner Roman Abramovich and Alexander Abramov, the head of the country's largest steel producer.</p>

	<p>In addition, Sweeney launched a separate account called @PutinJet. However, he warned that it may not be accurate, noting "there are a dozen VIP Russian planes, and ADS-B coverage isn't great in Russia."</p> <p>The @RUOligarchJets account has about 154,000 followers and the @PutinJet account has over 29,000 followers as of the time of publication. The accounts do not reveal who actually may be on the flights or other critical information that would be needed by intelligence agencies.</p> <p>"I launched [the accounts] because people had asked me to track them as they knew I had the capability to do so," Sweeney told FOX Business. He noted that he has not been contacted by the U.S. or Ukrainian governments about the accounts.</p> <p>In January, Sweeney said he <a href="#">turned down Musk's \$5,000 offer</a> to stop tracking his jet. Sweeney <a href="#">received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration</a> to track Musk's plane using the @ElonJet account, which has amassed over 389,000 followers to date. Sweeney asked Musk to up his offer to \$50,000 plus an internship, which Musk reportedly declined.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 DOL back online after data breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/state-department-of-licensing-site-back-online-after-data-breach">https://komonews.com/news/local/state-department-of-licensing-site-back-online-after-data-breach</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — After being offline for more than a month following a <a href="#">massive data breach</a> earlier this year, a website run by the state Department of Licensing that allows applicants to pursue professional and business licenses on Tuesday was back online.</p> <p>The absence of the state website spurred concerns from some that their person information had been compromised and some ended up losing income as a result of the breach.</p> <p>Barbara Alfond, a real estate broker, said she has not worked in over a month because she has been unable to obtain the professional license she needs.</p> <p>"I have clients waiting for me (and) I have clients who haven't been able to wait for me," she said. "I've lost business income (that is) gone for good and not something I can get back."</p> <p>Alford's license expired in late January and at the same time that the state's professional licensing system was abruptly shut down after suspicious activity led to the discovery of a data breach.</p> <p>She could risk working without a license but needs professional insurance coverage or should could be personally liable.</p> <p>"All of my personal assets and all I've ever worked for in my entire life could be in jeopardy," she said.</p> <p>At least 650,000 people who have current or former licenses issued by the agency have been watching and waiting to find out if their information was compromised.</p> <p>State officials said they have not known if their personal information was stolen, data that could include their Social Security numbers, e-mail addresses and their birth day information.</p> <p>Authorities said the data breach remains under investigation along with how it happened.</p> <p>Nathan Olson, spokesman for the agency, said authorities have been conducting a thorough investigation into what happened and froze activity on their online portal to ensure that it was safe to reactivate.</p> <p>The site was reactivated Tuesday, meaning that license holders can access it for their professional needs again.</p> <p>The agency did apologize to the people who may have been affected by the breach.</p>

	<p>"We are sorry (and) we apologize," Olson said. "It's a tough thing to balance (as) our first responsibility was to the security and safety of the data."</p> <p>While applicants were waiting for the online site to return, they were able to file a form that indicated their intent to renew their license.</p> <p>The agency is offering free credit monitoring for those affected by the data breach, while adding that it does not affect drivers or vehicle license systems.</p>
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Maritime threat: UN warns Nigeria</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newtelegraphng.com/maritime-threat-un-warns-nigeria-others-on-response/">https://www.newtelegraphng.com/maritime-threat-un-warns-nigeria-others-on-response/</a>
GIST	<p>The United Nations Counterterrorism Centre (UNCC) has warned Togo, Ghana and Nigeria, among others, that some extremist groups gaining ground in some African waters have capacity to take control of key maritime infrastructures in the ports.</p> <p>The United Nations body advised countries in West Africa to emulate Nigeria, using drones, which had become a viable option in its counter-piracy initiative. It noted that radars could be used to detect smaller vessels, especially at night and in bad weather. UNCC noted that terrorist groups were exploiting the existing gaps in border protection by making use of maritime travel in both East and West Africa waters. The Head of border security management at UN Counter-terrorism Centre, Rocco Messina, said that terrorist groups were now carrying out attacks in African ports.</p> <p>He disclosed this during a webinar hosted by UN to discuss technology and maritime border security, saying that it was vital to find a solution to the problem to prevent the travel and relocation of foreign terrorist fighters as they pose a major risk. Messina noted: "Surveillance technologies and high standards of security protocol are really critical. Relevant information about terrorist threats in maritime zones should be shared in real time." Also, Legal and Policy Adviser for Kenya's National Counter-terrorism Centre (KNCC), Robert Kibor, said the threat from extremists is now more severe than that of pirates. He said: "We have succeeded in terms of suppressing piracy but we are now seeing a new threat to maritime security in the form of terrorism and armed robberies at sea.</p> <p>"We have moved from piracy to terrorism and this is bringing a lot of challenges. There are a number of solutions that we think can help this particular menace, information sharing, investigations and prosecutions and cross maritime borders."</p> <p>A researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, Denys Reva, said that drones and radar technology could be used in the fight against terrorists. He said smaller boats were difficult to pick up on satellites and measures need to be enacted to better identify them. Reva stressed: "We cannot always rely on patrol vessels because they take their time to arrive and allow other actors to escape but this is where unmanned aerial vehicles could come into force.</p> <p>"The use of drones have become a viable option and Nigeria is using them in its counter-piracy initiative and radars could be used to detect smaller vessels, especially at night and in bad weather." Last week, UNCC noted that the United States had began its yearly counter-terrorism training programme for African forces in Ivory Coast, saying that the main focus was information sharing. According to the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command Africa, Admiral Jamie Sands, the training programme, called Flintlock, brings together over 400 soldiers from across West Africa, to bolster their skills as they confront attacks by armed groups linked to Al Qaeda and ISIS.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Report: Taliban exploits Internet Archive</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/memri-exposes-the-talibans-use-of-the-san-francisco-based-internet-archive-as-the-its-main-platform-for-posting-their-jihad-martyrdom-and-other-terrorist-videos">https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/memri-exposes-the-talibans-use-of-the-san-francisco-based-internet-archive-as-the-its-main-platform-for-posting-their-jihad-martyrdom-and-other-terrorist-videos</a>
GIST	<p><b>WASHINGTON, D.C. / ACCESSWIRE / March 1, 2022 /</b> The Middle East Media Research Institute (<a href="#">MEMRI</a>) has published a <a href="#">report</a> by MEMRI Executive Director Steven Stalinsky titled “The Taliban Choose The San Francisco-Based Internet Archive As Main Platform For Posting Their Jihad And Martyrdom Videos.”</p> <p>In the report, Mr. Stalinsky writes: “Every day, researchers from the MEMRI Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (JTTM) and Domestic Terrorism Threat Monitor (DTTM) projects see jihadis, as well as neo-Nazis/white supremacists, freely uploading their content directly to the Internet Archive (archive.org). Once it is uploaded, they circulate the Internet Archive links to it via their own social media accounts to their own networks of followers on a range of platforms, to all interested parties.”</p> <p>This report includes background on how the Internet Archive has become so popular amongst hate groups – both jihadis and neo-Nazi types. This has happened especially because the online library does nothing to prevent these groups from having free access to the platform, prioritizing its massive archive collection over the removal of any content, even if this content is actively inciting hatred and violence.</p> <p>Mr. Stalinsky continues: “In contrast to their attention to other online platforms, including YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, both Congress and media have failed to focus on the Internet Archive as a platform for hate groups. Such attention on their part is long overdue, if they really want to address online hate.”</p> <p>The massive online digital library allows these groups and individuals to easily create an account with only an email address, in order to – in the Internet Archive’s own words – ‘upload movies, audio, texts, software, images, and other formats... any time you wish.’ The page and link created when content is uploaded can be shared with anyone else at any time.</p> <p>MEMRI has published a number of reports on hate groups uploading their content to the Internet Archive. One series was on Al-Qaeda and Islamic State (ISIS) content hosted on it; most recently, in January 2021, we published an in-depth study on neo-Nazi and white supremacist use of the Internet Archive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Al-Qaeda, Jihadis Infest the San Francisco, California-Based “Internet Archive” Library</a>, August 17, 2011</li> <li>• <a href="#">U.S.-Based ‘Internet Archive’ Hosts Massive Amount Of Neo-Nazi, White Supremacist, And Holocaust Denial Propaganda – Serving As Major Resource For Recruitment And Radicalization</a>, January 26, 2021.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Treasury sanctions 4 men: ISIS fundraisers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/03/02/sanctions-ISIS-fundrasiers/9401646198972/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/03/02/sanctions-ISIS-fundrasiers/9401646198972/</a>
GIST	<p>March 2 (UPI) -- The Biden administration blacklisted four Africans accused of being financial facilitators for the Islamic State as it seeks to cut off funds to the terrorist organization.</p> <p>The Treasury named Farhad Hooper, Siraaj Miller, Abdella Hussein Abadigga and Peter Charles Mbaga for sanctions Tuesday over their role as being financial facilitators for ISIS and an associated terrorist organization in Mozambique as well as cell leaders.</p> <p>The federal department said Hooper, Miller and Abadigga worked in South Africa for the benefit of ISIS while Mbaga aided ISIS-M.</p> <p>"Treasury is taking this action to disrupt and expose key ISIS supporters who exploit South Africa's financial system to facilitate funding of ISIS branches and networks across Africa," Brian E. Nelson, the under secretary of the Treasury, said in <a href="#">a statement</a>. "The United States is working with our African partners, including in South Africa, to dismantle ISIS financial support networks on the continent."</p>



The sanctions came as ISIS is attempting to expand its influence in Africa by exploiting countries that have limited government control. The Biden administration said ISIS members and associates in South Africa have been playing an increasing role in this effort by facilitating the transfer of funds from the terrorist organization's hierarchy and that earned through crime across the continent.

The group in Mozambique [gained international notoriety](#) over its violent tactics that include the beheading and kidnapping of women and children in Cabo Delgado province in 2020.

[Human Rights Watch](#) last year said the ISIS-linked group has abducted hundreds of boys as young as 12 and was using them to fight government forces.

The Treasury said ISIS branches in Africa rely on theft, extortion, kidnapping-for-ransom plots and support from ISIS hierarchy for funding.

Hoomer was sanctioned on accusations of helping to organize the operations of an ISIS cell in Durban, South Africa. The federal agency said he provided his own properties and vehicles for the cell's activities and that he has claimed to have recruited and trained members for the group.

Hoomer also raised funds through kidnapping operations and extorted major businesses, the Treasury said, adding he was arrested in 2018 by South African authorities for his involvement in a plan to deploy incendiary devices near a mosque and commercial buildings.

Miller was blacklisted for training ISIS members to conduct robberies to raise money for the terrorist organization and for having secured housing for its members in 2018.

Abadigga was accused of recruiting South African men for ISIS and sending weapons to training camps and of having used his position at two South African mosques to extort members for money that was sent to ISIS supporters elsewhere on the continent.

Mbaga was sanctioned for facilitating funds transfer from South Africa and by procuring equipment, including weapons, for ISIS-M.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Index: Sahel global extremism epicenter</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.laprensalatina.com/sahel-was-global-extremism-epicenter-in-2021-global-terrorism-index/">https://www.laprensalatina.com/sahel-was-global-extremism-epicenter-in-2021-global-terrorism-index/</a>
GIST	<p>London, Mar 2 (EFE).- Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially the Sahel, recorded 48 percent of all extremist deaths globally in 2021, attributed to groups affiliated with the Islamic State (IS) terror group, while attacks declined by 68 percent in Western countries, where they were motivated more by political views than religious reasons.</p> <p>The ninth edition of the Global Terrorism Index, released on Wednesday, indicates that deaths from terrorism fell 1.2 percent last year, to 7,142, while attacks increased 17 percent to 5,226, which shows that “attacks became less deadly in 2021.”</p> <p>According to the report prepared by the Australian Institute for Economics and Peace, extremism is increasingly concentrated in conflict zones – where 97.6 percent of deaths from terrorism occurred -, with Afghanistan as the country with the highest impact from extremism, followed by Iraq, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Syria, Nigeria, Mali, Niger, Myanmar and Pakistan, out of the 163 countries included in the analysis.</p> <p>In European countries, as well as in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, there are five times more attacks motivated by far-left and far-right extremist ideologies than religiously motivated ones.</p> <p>Following military defeats in Syria and Iraq, IS has focused in the Sahel, where deaths from extremism have increased tenfold since 2007, especially in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, according to the researchers.</p>

This increasing violence in the Sahel is an outcome of strong population growth, the lack of water and food, the impact of climate change and weak governments, IEP founder, Steve Killelea, said in an interview with EFE.

Among the developed countries, the impact of extremism was felt most in the United States, placed 28th in the index, followed by Greece (29), Israel (30), the United Kingdom (31), Germany (33), France (35) and Spain (55).

The largest increase in extremist deaths in 2021 was recorded in Myanmar, where the number of people killed went from 24 in 2020 to 521, followed by Niger (257 to 588).

The biggest decline in deaths from extremism was recorded in Mozambique – 82 percent – to 414, on account of counter-insurgency operations against IS by the Mozambican forces.

IS overtook the Taliban to become “the deadliest extremist group in 2021” although deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates fell from 2,100 to 2,066, the report said.

The deadliest attack last year was committed by an IS suicide bomber on Aug. 26 against the Kabul International Airport, which left 170 people dead and more than 200 wounded.

Among IS affiliates, the Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen, which operates in the Sahel, was the “fastest growing terrorist organization” in 2021 and responsible for 351 deaths, up 69 percent.

Last year, there were 113 attacks in Europe – three by Islamic extremists, the lowest number since 2012 – and seven in the US, which recorded its lowest GTI score since 2015.

Religious extremism in the West decreased by 82 percent and there were 40 politically motivated attacks against three religiously motivated attacks, the study said.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 Militants edging to West Africa coast</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/sahel-based-militants-edging-south-toward-west-africas-most-stable-and-prosperous-states-11646221800">https://www.wsj.com/articles/sahel-based-militants-edging-south-toward-west-africas-most-stable-and-prosperous-states-11646221800</a>
GIST	<p>JACQUEVILLE, Ivory Coast—The Islamist militants who have rampaged through the heart of West Africa in recent years are now spreading toward the Gulf of Guinea coast, including some of the continent’s most stable and prosperous countries, according to African and U.S. officials.</p> <p>The past year has seen an uptick in violence instigated by al Qaeda affiliates along the northern borders of Benin and Togo, with militant cells infiltrating as far as Ghana and Ivory Coast, the world’s top cocoa producers.</p> <p>The attacks on countries along the bend in Africa’s Atlantic coast appear to confirm warnings that U.S. military commanders have issued for several years: Unless stopped, militant violence won’t remain contained in the landlocked nations of the Sahel, the semiarid expanses directly south of the Sahara.</p> <p>“It does look like the jihadists have the aim of getting to the sea,” said Ghanaian army Brig. Gen. Felicia Twum-Barima.</p> <p>The jihadists’ southward push marks a new chapter in a decadelong security crisis that has claimed thousands of lives since al Qaeda-linked fighters swept through northern Mali in 2012, triggering the deployment of thousands of troops by France to reinforce its former colony. The fighting ebbed, then surged again across the Sahel, with jihadist factions loyal to al Qaeda and Islamic State attacking local and allied forces, as well as each other. Since 2020, the region has seen a wave of coups by soldiers pledging to restore security.</p>

France has 4,600 troops fighting in the Sahel, most of them in Mali, but broke with the Malian military junta after it welcomed Russian mercenaries and said it would begin formal negotiations with al Qaeda linked jihadist leaders. In mid February, Paris announced it would withdraw its forces from Mali and redeploy them elsewhere in the region.

“We should be very concerned about the continued expansion of al Qaeda and al Qaeda affiliates across the Sahel, and now threatening to move down into the littoral states,” Rear Adm. Jamie Sands, commander of U.S. special-operations troops in Africa, said in an interview in Ivory Coast last week : “It looks like they’re doing it in a very methodical way.”

Last year, there were 13 Islamist militant attacks in Ivory Coast, five in Benin and one in Togo, according to Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project figures assembled by the Pentagon-funded Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

By contrast, there were no militant attacks in those countries in 2019, and three in 2020, all in Ivory Coast.

Ghanaian officials say they haven’t seen any incidents inside their country. Attacks, however, have taken place just a few miles away, across the border with Burkina Faso.

On Feb. 8, four park rangers, a French instructor and two drivers were killed and 10 others wounded by a series of booby-trap bombs laid inside the Benin portion of W National Park, according to African Parks, the nonprofit conservation group managing the park.

Two days later, another roadside bomb hit a Benin army commando team, killing one soldier.

France, the former colonial power in Benin and much of the rest of West Africa, retaliated with an airstrike that the French said killed 40 fighters from Ansarul Islam, a small al Qaeda-affiliated outfit.

“I’m not surprised that they’re here—but the speed is alarming,” Gen. Twum-Barima said on the sidelines of the nine-day U.S.-led West African commando exercises in Jacqueville, Ivory Coast that ended Monday.

The annual special-operations training event is intended to help elite West African military units combat militants and counter their guerrilla tactics.

Some 370 troops from four African nations and seven Western countries attended the exercises, hosted for the first time in a country on the Gulf of Guinea. Ghana is slated to host in 2023 and the following year.

The coastal nations aren’t experiencing violence on the scale seen in the hard-hit Sahelian countries. Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso saw 2,005 attacks last year, up 70% from 1,180 in 2020, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. There were 4,839 deaths associated with attacks in the Sahel last year.

But the experience of Burkina Faso is a reminder of how quickly an Islamist insurgency can spread in areas where borders are porous, local grievances festering and government presence limited. The country was relatively quiet in 2017 and, just two years later, found itself overwhelmed by Islamic State and al Qaeda affiliates.

Last year, Burkina Faso experienced more than 1,100 attacks.

U.S., Canadian and European efforts to help contain the spread of militancy in the region have been complicated by recent military coups in Mali and Burkina Faso.

In Mali, special-forces Col. Assimi Goïta, a past recipient of U.S. military training, has led two coups since August 2020. Since his second takeover, in May 2021, the military junta has hired 800 to 1,000 mercenaries from a private Russian firm, the Wagner Group, to provide internal security, according to U.S. officials.

The U.S. decried both the coup and the deployment of Russian mercenaries, and didn't invite Mali to this year's West African commando exercises.

The U.S. counts on France—which had anchored a 5,400-strong European force focused on Mali until its falling out with the junta—to lead the fight against Islamist militants in the region, with American assistance in intelligence, training, logistics and drone support.

“Their departure will create a vacuum which will be filled by the terrorist organizations,” Mohamed Bazoum, president of Niger, said after the French announcement. He said that since the coup, Malian soldiers had abandoned posts on Niger's border.

The U.S. also canceled Burkina Faso's invitation to the exercises in Ivory Coast following a military coup last month. The Dutch government withdrew its commando trainers.

President Bazoum said French and other European forces would be welcome to set up new bases in Niger and predicted they would also operate in Benin and other coastal countries. France already has thousands of troops stationed across Africa, including 950 in Ivory Coast, 350 in Senegal, 1,450 in Djibouti and 350 in Gabon, an addition to the 4,600 which were spread across the Sahelian battlegrounds of Mali, Niger and Chad.

The U.S. is also discussing ways to boost Ivory Coast's defensive capabilities, according to American officials.

Governments on the coast now find themselves pinched between the militant threat approaching from the north, and a surge in piracy aimed at commercial shipping in the Gulf of Guinea to their south.

Militants see economic opportunity in the coastal countries, according to U.S. and African officials. Ghana fears that Islamist groups aim to gain control of the country's gold mines. U.S. intelligence agencies estimate al Qaeda affiliates already extort about \$20 million in cash or gold each year from artisanal miners in the Sahel.

Supporters of Islamic State of the Greater Sahara also operate warehouses in Benin, Ghana and Togo, according to a United Nations report.

Both Islamic State and JNIM, the al Qaeda umbrella group, take advantage of pastoral and smuggling routes in the north of Ghana and Benin, European security officials say.

Commanders and diplomats warn that military action alone is unlikely to stem expansion of extremist violence. African militant groups often take root in isolated areas where governments are weakest, exploiting local grievances and rivalries with the promise of strict enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic law.

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HEADLINE	03/01 Treasury: domestic extremists a 'challenge'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/domestic-extremists-a-challenge-to-financial-institutions-u-s-treasury-says-11646178570?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/domestic-extremists-a-challenge-to-financial-institutions-u-s-treasury-says-11646178570?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>Domestic extremists present a “challenge” to financial institutions, the U.S. Treasury Department warned in a new report that analyzed their funding sources alongside those of foreign terrorists.</p> <p>Because so-called domestic violent extremists typically have normal transactional activity and often use legal fundraising methods, they can be hard for authorities to detect, the Treasury said Tuesday in a survey of illicit finance threats.</p>

Tuesday's report marked the first time the Treasury had analyzed the funding methods used by domestic extremists.

A relatively new priority area for the government, domestic violent extremists, or DVEs, are U.S. extremists motivated by domestic concerns, including racial hatred and antigovernment animus. They differ under the Treasury's new classification scheme from homegrown extremists, who are defined as U.S.-based individuals but primarily inspired by global jihadism.

"The growing threat posed by DVEs has led to an increasing focus (and reporting) on financial activity associated with unlawful acts of force or violence," the Treasury said.

Though many domestic extremists fund their own activity, the Treasury said, the department also called out crowdfunding platforms as a source of income for the extremists. Amid the pandemic, those payment systems have become "a necessity rather than a convenience," the department said.

The Treasury Department listed The Base, a white-supremacist group deemed a terrorist organization by Canada, the U.K. and Australia, as one example of a violent group that had drawn its focus. Several Base members have pleaded guilty to U.S. firearms and immigration-related charges, and prosecutors allege those members were hoping bloodshed could galvanize a civil war.

The Treasury, which intends to release a national strategy for combating terrorist financing in the coming weeks, said it didn't include in its risk assessment individuals engaged solely in activities protected by the First Amendment.

The prospect of governments using financial tools against domestic agitators drew increased attention after Canada last month invoked never-before-used emergency powers and ordered financial institutions to freeze accounts of anti-Covid-19-mandate demonstrators who had blockaded the country's capital and some border crossings. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has since revoked his government's use of those powers.

Some U.S. financial service providers independently cut off some members of right-wing groups, including the Proud Boys, in the wake of violent demonstrations, in particular after the riot at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 US: no decision on Taliban recognition</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-176923">https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-176923</a>
GIST	<p>US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Thomas West, in a special interview with TOLONews, said that no decision has been made regarding the recognition of the Islamic Emirate by the United States.</p> <p>He said the US wants to see a representative government formed in Afghanistan and the commitments made to the international community upheld.</p> <p>"We haven't made a decision on recognition. I think a lot of countries haven't. We want to see the establishment of a responsible record of conduct when it comes to treatment of Afghans. We want to see this practice of the detaining of women--and in particular detaining of women protesters--we want to see that end resolutely. And those are ongoing areas of conversation," he said.</p> <p>West said the US is concerned about the possible increase in Daesh and Al-Qaida activity in Afghanistan, and stressed that Daesh is the shared enemy of Kabul and Washington, and the US wants the Islamic Emirate to succeed in suppressing Daesh.</p> <p>"We definitely have concerns about the nature of the Taliban's campaign against ISIS, but we want to see that succeed. We don't want to see any ISIS-K in Afghanistan. We will see when the weather, I think, continues to warm up. But we don't want to see any of those attacks," he added.</p>

	<p>The Islamic Emirate, meanwhile, said they will not allow any group to threaten any country from Afghan soil. Abdul Salam Hanafi, Deputy Prime Minister, speaking at a ceremony in Kabul marking the second anniversary of the signing of the Doha Agreement on Tuesday, said the Islamic Emirate in that agreement committed to not allow Afghan soil to be used against any country.</p> <p>"In the Doha Agreement we made that promise and we are upholding our commitment," Hanafi said.</p> <p>West also raised concerns about the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and said the war in Ukraine is likely to divert the world's attention from Afghanistan.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/01 What happened to Russia's air force?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/what-happened-to-russias-air-force-us-officials-experts-stumped/ar-AAUfLbQ">https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/what-happened-to-russias-air-force-us-officials-experts-stumped/ar-AAUfLbQ</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) -Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, U.S. intelligence had predicted a blistering assault by Moscow that would quickly mobilize the vast Russian air power that its military assembled in order to dominate Ukraine's skies.</p> <p>But the first six days have confounded those expectations and instead seen Moscow act far more delicately with its air power, so much so that U.S. officials can't exactly explain what's driving Russia's apparent risk-averse behavior.</p> <p>"They're not necessarily willing to take high risks with their own aircraft and their own pilots," a senior U.S. defense official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Vastly outmatched by Russia's military, in terms of raw numbers and firepower, Ukraine's own air force is still flying and its air defenses are still deemed to be viable - a fact that is baffling military experts.</p> <p>After the opening salvos of the war on Feb. 24, analysts expected the Russian military to try to immediately destroy Ukraine's air force and air defenses.</p> <p>That would have been "the logical and widely anticipated next step, as seen in almost every military conflict since 1938," wrote the RUSI think-tank in London, in an article called "The Mysterious Case of the Missing Russian Air Force."</p> <p>Instead, Ukrainian air force fighter jets are still carrying out low-level, defensive counter-air and ground-attack sorties. Russia is still flying through contested airspace.</p> <p>Ukrainian troops with surface-to-air rockets are able to threaten Russian aircraft and create risk to Russian pilots trying to support ground forces.</p> <p>"There's a lot of stuff they're doing that's perplexing," said Rob Lee, a Russian military specialist at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.</p> <p>He thought the beginning of the war would be "maximum use of force."</p> <p>"Because every day it goes on there's a cost and the risk goes up. And they're not doing that and it just is really hard to explain for any realistic reason."</p> <p>The confusion over how Russia has used its air force comes as President Joe Biden's administration rejects calls by Kyiv for a no-fly zone that could draw the United States directly into a conflict with Russia, whose plans for its air force are unclear.</p>

Military experts have seen evidence of a lack of Russian air force coordination with ground troop formations, with multiple Russian columns of troops sent forward beyond the reach of their own air defense cover.

That leaves Russian soldiers vulnerable to attack from Ukrainian forces, including those newly equipped with Turkish drones and U.S. and British anti-tank missiles. David Deptula, a retired U.S. Air Force three-star general who once commanded the no-fly zone over northern Iraq, said he was surprised that Russia didn't work harder to establish air dominance from the start.

"The Russians are discovering that coordinating multi-domain operations is not easy," Deptula told Reuters. "And that they are not as good as they presumed they were."

While the Russians have been under-performing, Ukraine's military has been exceeding expectations so far.

Ukraine's experience from the last eight years of fighting with Russian-backed separatist forces in the east was dominated by static World War One-style trench warfare.

By contrast Russia's forces got combat experience in Syria, where they intervened on the side of President Bashar al-Assad, and demonstrated some ability to synchronize ground maneuvers with air and drone attacks.

Ukraine's ability to keep flying air force jets is a visible demonstration of the country's resilience in the face of attack and has been a morale booster, both to its own military and Ukraine's people, experts say.

It has also led to mythologizing of the Ukrainian air force, including a tale about a Ukrainian jet fighter that purportedly single-handedly downed six Russian aircrafts, dubbed online as "The Ghost of Kyiv."

A Reuters Fact Check showed how a clip <https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-animation-ukrainianjet/fact-check-animation-miscaptioned-as-if-to-show-video-of-ukrainian-fighter-jet-shooting-down-russian-plane-idUSL1N2V035G> from the videogame Digital Combat Simulator was miscaptioned online to claim it was an actual Ukrainian fighter jet shooting down a Russian plane.

Biden led a standing ovation in support of Ukrainians in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, praising their determination and mocking Putin for thinking he could just "roll into Ukraine" unopposed.

"Instead he met a wall of strength he never imagined. He met the Ukrainian people," Biden said.

The United States estimates that Russia is using just over 75 aircraft in its Ukraine invasion, the senior U.S. official said.

Ahead of the invasion, officials had estimated that Russia had potentially readied hundreds of the thousands of aircraft in its air force for a Ukraine mission. However, the senior U.S. official on Tuesday declined to estimate how many Russian combat aircraft, including attack helicopters, might still be available and outside Ukraine.

Both sides are taking losses.

"We do have indications that they've lost some (aircraft), but so have the Ukrainians," the official said.

"The airspace is actively contested every day."

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HEADLINE	03/01 UN: climate change to uproot millions
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/un-climate-change-to-uproot-millions-especially-in-asia/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/un-climate-change-to-uproot-millions-especially-in-asia/</a>



JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The walls of Saifullah's home in northern Jakarta are lined like tree rings, marking how high the floodwaters have reached each year — some more than four feet from the damp dirt floor.

When the water gets too high, Saifullah, who like many Indonesians only uses one name, sends his family to stay with friends. He guards the house until the water can be drained using a makeshift pump. If the pump stops working, he uses a bucket or just waits until the water recedes.

"It's a normal thing here," Saifullah, 73, said. "But this is our home. Where should we go?"

As the world's most rapidly sinking major city, Jakarta demonstrates how climate change is making more places uninhabitable. With an estimated one-third of the city expected to be submerged in the coming decades — in part because of the rising Java Sea — the Indonesian government is planning to move its capital some 1,240 miles (2,000 kilometers) northeast to the island of Borneo, relocating as many as 1.5 million civil servants.

It's a huge undertaking and part of the mass movement of people that is expected to accelerate in the years ahead.

A staggering 143 million people will likely be uprooted over the next 30 years by rising seas, drought, searing temperatures and other climate catastrophes, according to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published Monday by the United Nations.

In Asia, governments are already scrambling to deal with it.

One in three migrants in the world today comes from Asia, which leads the world in the number of people being displaced by extreme weather, largely storms and flooding, according to the report. With rural villages emptying out and megacities like Jakarta at risk, scientists predict migration flows and the need for planned relocations will only grow.

"Under all global warming levels, some regions that are presently densely populated will become unsafe or uninhabitable," the report said.

By one estimate, as many as 40 million people in South Asia may be forced to move over the next 30 years because of a lack of water, crop failure, storm surges and other disasters.

Rising temperatures are of particular concern, said Stanford University environmental scientist Chris Field, who chaired the U.N. report in previous years.

"There are relatively few places on Earth that are simply too hot to live now," he said. "But it's beginning to look like in Asia, there may be more of those in the future and we need to think really hard about the implications of that."

No nation offers asylum or other legal protections to people displaced specifically because of climate change, though the Biden administration has studied the idea.

People leave their homes for a variety of reasons including violence and poverty, but what's happening in Bangladesh demonstrates the role climate change also plays, said Amali Tower, who founded the organization Climate Refugees.

Scientists predict as many as 2 million people in the low-lying country may be displaced by rising seas by 2050. Already, more than 2,000 migrants arrive at its capital of Dhaka every day, many fleeing coastal towns.

"You can see the actual movement of people. You can actually see the increasing disasters. It's tangible," Tower said.

The migration flows can be slowed if countries like the United States and European nations act now to drop their greenhouse gas emissions to zero, she said. Others say richer countries that produce more emissions should offer humanitarian visas to people from countries that are disproportionately impacted.

Dealing with climate migrants will become a major policy issue for Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America as well over the next few decades, according to the U.N. report. Most people will be moving from rural areas to cities, especially in Asia where two-thirds of the population could be urban in 30 years.

“It’s essentially people migrating from rural areas and then probably squatting in a slum somewhere,” said Abhas Jha, a practice manager with the World Bank’s Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management in South Asia.

The migration doesn’t have to cause a crisis, said Vittoria Zanuso, executive director of the Mayors Migration Council, a global group of city leaders.

In northern Dhaka, for example, officials are building shelters for climate migrants and improving the water supply. They also are working with smaller cities to be designated “climate havens” that welcome migrants, Zanuso said.

The influx of a new work force offers smaller cities an opportunity for economic growth, she said. And it prevents migrants who may be fleeing villages threatened by rising seas from seeking refuge in a city with scarce water supplies and basically “swapping one climate risk for another.”

In coming years, she said helping prepare cities for the influx of migrants will be key: “They are on the frontlines.”

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HEADLINE	03/01 Heat wave glimpse climate change impact
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Heat-wave-a-glimpse-of-climate-change-s-impact-in-16968174.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Heat-wave-a-glimpse-of-climate-change-s-impact-in-16968174.php</a>
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The U.S. Pacific Northwest was in the throes of a record-shattering heat wave last summer when a woman in her 70s was wheeled into an emergency room with symptoms of a life-threatening heat stroke.</p> <p>Desperate to cool her, Dr. Alexander St. John grabbed a body bag, filled it with ice from the hospital kitchen and zipped the woman inside. Within minutes, her body temperature dropped and her symptoms improved.</p> <p>“I’ve never had to do that before. It was surreal,” said St. John. “Twenty years ago, it seems like we would talk about climate change as something that would happen over the coming generations — and all of a sudden it seems to be accelerating to the point where we’re all experiencing it in real time.”</p> <p>The technique was used to save several other patients at Seattle’s Harborview Medical Center during the five-day heat wave last June that saw temperatures spike as high as 118 degrees Fahrenheit (48 degrees Celsius) in some places and killed an estimated 600 people or more across Oregon, Washington and western Canada.</p> <p>The sweltering stretch across the normally cool region offers a glimpse of the types of extreme weather events that will accelerate in North America within 30 years without a coordinated effort to slow climate change, according to a United Nations report released this week. Even if global warming is limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius, people across the U.S., Mexico and Canada will be at increasing risk of catastrophic weather events.</p> <p>The report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change lays out how worsening global warming will endanger people’s health, drive food insecurity, spur economic upheaval and trigger migration from</p>

increasingly uninhabitable places. Low-income and minority populations will be the hardest hit, according to the report, exacerbating existing inequities.

In the West, the report forecasts intensifying drought, extreme heat and wildfires. The Gulf Coast is expected to get more destructive hurricanes and rising sea levels. In the Midwest and Northeast, heavier rains are expected to cause more flooding and damage to crops.

In the summer of 2019, flooding in the U.S. Midwest and South disrupted barge traffic on the Mississippi River and damaged cropland in Ohio and Indiana. A different downpour and flood months earlier crippled Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska.

The economic impacts will be profound. Warming water and ocean acidification will disrupt commercial fisheries, extreme heat will mean lower yields of key crops such as corn and soybeans and drought will cause livestock losses as animals have less ground to forage, the report found.

Since 1980, there have been 35 floods not associated with hurricanes in the U.S. that have caused more than \$1 billion in damage and more than half of those have been since 2010, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"We're exposed to untold damage," said Kathleen Miller, a lead author of the report's North America chapter who studies the economic impacts of climate change at the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

"It's time to step up and start thinking about what are our priorities and how can we address these mounting threats," she said.

The report still holds out hope that people can slow climate change — or at least adapt to blunt its effects. Prioritizing society's most vulnerable will have the greatest impact on climate resiliency, it said.

The type of adjustments cited in the report are already underway in the Pacific Northwest, which was not built for hot weather. In Seattle, for example, 44% of homes have air conditioning.

After last summer's deadly heat wave, Portland officials are considering alarm systems in public housing that would alert building managers when temperatures climb above 100 degrees. City officials also approved a plan to distribute 15,000 heat pumps, which are an energy-efficient way to cool spaces. Oregon lawmakers are also considering \$15 million in funding to boost distribution air purifiers, air conditioners and heat pumps.

Longer-term discussions in the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere include painting roof tops white and using lighter-colored pavement to repel sunlight, planting more trees in urban centers and creating neighborhood cooling hubs that could also be social spots.

The measures will be key for the groups hit hardest by last summer's deadly heat wave — the elderly living alone, the disabled and the poor.

None of those who died in Portland had central air conditioning, more than half lived in apartments and 10% lived in mobile homes, according to data released by Multnomah County. The city's light-rail train stopped working, making it difficult for low-income residents to reach cooling centers hastily set up in public libraries.

An analysis of data from 1,000 residences found the average temperature in richer homes was 75 degrees, compared with 125 degrees in poorer homes, said Vivek Shandas, a climate professor at Portland State University.

That shows how those with resources can "further isolate themselves and safeguard themselves," he said.

	<p>Renee Salas, an emergency room doctor and a fellow at Harvard University's Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment, noted that health risks are increasingly not only from heat, but from worsening wildfires that send smoke plumes thousands of miles across North America and rising temperatures that could foster the spread of diseases by mosquitoes and ticks such as dengue fever, West Nile and Lyme disease.</p> <p>Adaptation will mean considering climate change as a secondary diagnosis for many patients and treating it accordingly, Salas said. In the future, doctors might write prescriptions for air purifiers or heat pumps the way they do for medications and a national system of health records could help keep medical treatment consistent for patients who become climate refugees.</p> <p>“There are so many things that we can do in order to optimally identify who’s most at risk and to then help protect them,” she said. “The time to do that is now, when we’re already beginning to see the impact.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 UN: Africa suffers warming; to get worse</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/africa-suffering-warming-worse-83197342">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/africa-suffering-warming-worse-83197342</a>
GIST	<p>Although Africa has contributed relatively little to the planet's greenhouse gas emissions, the continent has suffered some of the world's heaviest impacts of climate change, from famine to flooding.</p> <p>Yet from its coral reefs to its highest peaks, the reverberations of human-caused global warming will only get worse, according to a new United Nations report</p> <p>The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted Monday that Saharan flooding, heat and drought will increase, Africa's rich array of wildlife and plants will decline and glaciers on its most iconic mountains will disappear in coming decades.</p> <p>On a continent already grappling with high poverty levels and food insecurity, the panel warned that fishermen and farmers will feel the pain of future climate change on their lives and livelihoods.</p> <p>In Kenya, farmer Safari Mbuvi already is trying to weather his country's a four-year drought — and watching his crops fail, again and again.</p> <p>“Since I was young, my father used to get a bounty harvest in this farm, but now, there seems to be a change in climate and the rains are no longer dependable,” he said. “I will not harvest anything, not even a single sack of maize is possible. ... And I am not the only one. Every farmer in this area has lost everything.”</p> <p>Warming temperatures will weaken Africa's food production system by leading to water scarcity and shorter growing seasons, the U.N. report said. Yields of olives, sorghum, coffee, tea and livestock production are expected to decline.</p> <p>“Agricultural productivity growth has been reduced by 34% since 1961 due to climate change more than any other region.” the panel said.</p> <p>Climate change, along with conflicts, instability and economic crises, has contributed to hunger. Since 2012, the undernourished population in sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 45.6%, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. And in 2020, approximately 98 million people suffered from acute food insecurity and needed humanitarian assistance in Africa, said the Global Report on Food Crises by the World Food Programme.</p> <p>If the world warms just another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2050, an additional 1.4 million African children will suffer severe stunting from malnutrition that limits growth and cognitive development, the IPCC said.</p>

“The lack of food and under-nutrition are strongly linked with hot climates in the sub-Saharan area and less rainfall in West and Central Africa,” the panel said in a FAQ document. “Climate change can undermine children's education attainment, thus reducing their chances for well-paid jobs or higher incomes later in life.”

Jean Paul Adam, who heads the climate change division at the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa, said, “Africa constitutes 17% of global population but only accounts for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. This is the region of the world already being severely impacted of climate change plus having an extremely low adaptive capacity.”

Climate change has a major social injustice component, with the poor hit harder by pollution from the rich, said former Ireland President Mary Robinson, now with The Elders, a Nelson Mandela- founded group of senior statesmen. “All of the injustices are captured by looking at the region of Africa.”

Drought is a problem that hits the continent particularly hard. While only 7% of the world's disasters were drought related, they caused slightly more than one-third of the disaster deaths, “mostly in Africa,” the IPCC report said.

Droughts have also reduced Africa's hydropower by about 5% compared to the long-term average, hindering growth, the report said.

“When we look at impacts, it isn't just that Africa is getting hit with the droughts and cyclones and the sea level rise and the disruption of rainfall patterns,” said Canadian climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, chief scientist for The Nature Conservancy. “It's that their vulnerability is so much higher than a lot of other places.”

Scientists say it is impossible to untangle Africa's poverty and harm from climate change.

“Africa gets the short shrift because it's in some ways more vulnerable to physical impacts, but also because there's going to be a lot of people living on less than a dollar a day,” said climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the Breakthrough Institute.

Monday's report said sea-surface temperatures are projected to rise, threatening fragile marine ecosystems, including East African coral reefs. The report warns of threats posed to livelihoods of 12.3 million people who depend on fisheries.

The report said global warming also will hit Africa's famous wildlife and highest mountains.

It predicted glacier ice covers on the Ruwenzori Mountains and Mount Kenya would be gone by 2030 and that Mount Kilimanjaro would lose its around 2040.

By 2100, the report said, climate change is expected to lead to loss of more than half of African bird and mammal species — and a 20% to 25% decline in the productivity of Africa's lakes and plant species. Increased damage to coral reefs from pollution and climate change is expected to harm fisheries and overall marine biodiversity.

In the coming decades, Africa's mainland, islands and coastal cities will be exposed to climate change risks that can seriously undermine economic sectors such agriculture, tourism, transportation and energy.

The report predicts reduced frequency of Category 5 cyclones, although it says they are projected to be more intense with high impacts upon landfall.

By 2030, the report projects that 108 to 116 million people in Africa will be exposed to sea-level rise — and that without adaptation measures, 12 major coastal cities will suffer a total of \$65 billion to \$86.5 billion in damages.

	<p>Rapid African urbanization, inadequate infrastructure as well growth of informal settlements will expose more people to climate hazards, the report said.</p> <p>It noted that sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that has recorded increasing rates of flood mortality since the 1990 — and that millions of people were displaced by weather-related causes in 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>“A lot of cities are completely unprepared for the scale of the challenges ahead, or even actively making the situation worse,” said Kaisa Kosonen a senior policy advisor at Greenpeace Nordic. “Real action on climate change requires resilient urban development and justice.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 UN: droughts, less water in Europe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/droughts-water-europe-warming-wrecks-crops-83199765">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/droughts-water-europe-warming-wrecks-crops-83199765</a>
GIST	<p>LA HERRADURA, Spain -- “Herders and farmers have their feet on the ground, but their eyes on the sky.” The old saying is still popular in Spain’s rural communities who, faced with recurrent droughts, have historically paraded sculptures of saints to pray for rain.</p> <p>The saints are out again this year as large swaths of Spain face one of the driest winters on record. Even as irrigation infrastructure boomed along with industrial farming, the country’s ubiquitous dams and desalination plants are up against a looming water crisis scientists have been warning about for decades.</p> <p>“We are facing a drastic situation,” said Juan Camacho, a farmer in the southern province of Granada, as he looked hopelessly at withered leaves of avocado plants and their fruits, smaller than usual this year.</p> <p>Not far from his orchard, the region's largest reservoir is down to 15% of its capacity following over two months without a drop of rain. And at least half of that, Camacho said, “is just muddy water, completely useless.”</p> <p>Declining agricultural yields in Europe — and the battle for diminishing water resources, especially in the southern continent — are perils that lie ahead as global temperatures continue to rise, the world’s top climate scientists said this week.</p> <p>Their conclusions are part of a report by the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released Monday. The panel's periodic assessments inform policymaker decisions about how to prevent the planet from warming beyond the 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 Fahrenheit) already gained since industrial times.</p> <p>For Europe, heat and flooding in addition to agricultural losses and water scarcity will be major climate impacts, the report said. And while European awareness of global warming motivates policymakers to do more, scientists say the ambition and execution of solutions vary greatly from country to country.</p> <p>Extreme heat, floods and droughts will lead to widespread disruption of the economy, including damage to infrastructure and energy supplies, the need for more air conditioning and greater water demand, the report warned.</p> <p>As warming rises faster in Europe than the global mean, panelists paint a picture of a continent divided in two: an increasingly arid south, struggling with desertification and competing for scarcer water — and a north adopting a more traditional Mediterranean climate that could provide some increased crop yields and forest growth, but with risks of its own.</p> <p>If temperatures rise an additional 1.9 degrees Celsius (3.4 Fahrenheit), corn harvest losses could reach 50%, especially in southern Europe, the report warned. Harvests of wheat, meanwhile, could increase in the north as long as warming doesn’t exceed 2 degrees since pre-industrial levels — or 0.9 degrees above the current average temperature.</p>

But this is no silver lining. From a continental perspective, the report says that due to combined heat and drought, “substantive agricultural production losses are projected for most European areas over the 21st century, which will not be offset by gains in Northern Europe.”

“There are some vegetables and warm climate crops that might see benefits in the short term,” Rachel Licker, a climate expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, told The Associated Press. “But the major cereal crops, the major commodities, the major crops that are exported and really form the basis of a lot of the economy are the ones that are likely to be negatively affected.”

Europe will also suffer other negative impacts. Coastal damage is projected to increase at least tenfold by the end of the century — and, if the 3 degree Celsius (5.4 Fahrenheit) warming threshold is reached, “damage costs and people affected by precipitation and river flooding may double.”

For some coastal communities it will be “an existential threat,” the report said, adding that traditional lifestyles of the Sami and the Nenets peoples are already under threat in the European Arctic.

Inequality is expected to grow within and among countries as the continent sees more deaths from heatstroke, unbearable summers and irreparable damage to ecosystems.

Joaquín Montes, 50, is among those set to lose more. He is one of roughly 10 million farmers in the European Union who feed 440 million consumers inside and outside the bloc.

Sandwiched between the tourist-magnet Costa del Sol and the Sierra Nevada range in southern Spain, the ravines where Montes’ custard apple and avocado orchards sit should have plenty of water.

But with 41% less rain since October than average for the same period between 1980 and 2010, dams contain almost no water. Private ponds that are supposed to last farmers through summer are exhausted. And, with no fresh water replenishing aquifers, salty seawater is making them useless.

“Us farmers, we are used to dealing with drought,” said Montes, who learned the job from his father when he was 14. “But every year we see less and less rain. I fear for my livelihood.”

Environmentalists say landowners who switched from traditional crops to profitable but thirsty ones such as avocados or mangoes are the tip of a larger problem: industrial-scale, single-crop agriculture that has displaced smaller, traditional farmers.

“The model is one of ill-planning and pure false developmentalism,” said Julio Barea, a geologist and water campaigner with the environmental group Greenpeace.

In Spain, the surface of arable land devoted to intensive agriculture with irrigation has increased to a quarter of the total in recent decades, according to official Agriculture Ministry figures, taking over terrain once used for rain-fed crops.

“We are hitting the wall of having no water,” Barea said. “And it’s going to be catastrophic. We need to change our mindset.”

As water scarcity hits southern Europe first, followed by Western and Central Europe, the U.N. report says irrigation will continue to be a solution for some to feed a warming continent, but it will be limited by water availability.

Additional means for watering crops won’t even be an option to consider in places like Spain’s southeast, according to food systems expert Marta Rivera-Ferre, who helped review the report.

“The elevated risk of drought there has to let us think again about how best to adapt,” she said.



	<p>Patrick Verkooijen, chief executive of the Rotterdam-based Global Center on Adaptation, said the report's message is "that for many now the time is already adapt or die."</p> <p>"The cost of inaction is much higher than the cost of action when it comes to making agriculture and food systems climate-resilient," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Shocking lessons on Russia military</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/shocking-lessons-us-military-leaders-learned-watching-putins-invasion-1683625?">https://www.newsweek.com/shocking-lessons-us-military-leaders-learned-watching-putins-invasion-1683625?</a>
GIST	<p>Russia's military is weak and backwards.</p> <p>Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine produced this paradigm-shifting surprise—one that should transform the West's view of Russia's prowess, the threat that the country represents, and the Kremlin's future in the global arena.</p> <p>After just one day of fighting, Russia's ground force lost most of its initial momentum, undermined by shortages of fuel, ammunition and even food, but also because of a poorly trained and led force. Russia began to compensate for the weaknesses of its land army with more long-range air, missile and artillery strikes. And President Putin resorted to a nuclear threat—a reaction, <a href="#">U.S. military</a> experts say, to the failure of Moscow's conventional forces to make quick progress on the ground.</p> <p>Other military observers are flabbergasted that a Russian invasion force, fully prepared and operating from Russian soil, has been able to move just tens of miles into an adjoining country. One retired U.S. Army general told <i>Newsweek</i> in an email: "We know that Russia has a plodding army and that Russian military force has always been a blunt instrument, but why risk the antipathy of the entire planet if you have no prospect of achieving even minimal gains." The Army general believes that the only explanation is that the Kremlin overestimated its own forces.</p> <p>"I believe that at the heart of Russian military thinking is how Marshall Zhukov marched across Eastern Europe to Berlin," a former high-level <a href="#">CIA</a> official told <i>Newsweek</i> in an interview. Zhukov's orders were to "line up the artillery and ... flatten everything ahead of you," he says. "'Then send in the peasant Army to kill or rape anyone left alive.' Subtle the Russians are not."</p> <p>In the short term, Russia's military failures in Ukraine increase the threat of escalation, including the possibility of the <a href="#">use of nuclear weapons</a>. But in the longer term, if escalation doesn't worsen and the Ukrainian conflict can be contained, Russian conventional military weakness upends many assumptions that geopolitical strategists—even those inside the U.S. government—make about Russia as a military threat.</p> <p>For the United States and the West, the stumbling Ukraine invasion recalls the collapse of the Soviet Union, an eye-opening moment when it became clear that a supposedly unstoppable military shrouded a crumbling economy and a weak political and human base. It seems, three decades later, that few lessons have been learned. Moscow continues to invest in hardware at the cost of ignoring the human dimension of warfare (and the human dimensions of the strength of the nation state). Russian leaders have also ignored the reality that success in the information age—even military success—demands education, open initiative and even freedom.</p> <p>"No dictator or authoritarian who wants to maintain power ever wants to instill too much skill in subordinate military leaders," the retired Army general wrote to <i>Newsweek</i>. Whether it be Saddam Hussein or <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>, the officer says, too much skill on the part of military subordinates is seen as increasing the likelihood of a coup.</p> <p>U.S. military analysts and experts extracted several lessons as they watched Russia's invasion of Ukraine unfold last week. On Thursday at about 4:00 a.m. local time, Russia invaded Ukraine along four main</p>

axes, attacking Ukraine's capital Kyiv from Belarus in the north, just 70 miles away, and from Russian soil further east, moving westward towards the country's largest city (some 2.5 million inhabitants).

The second axis bore down on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city (population 1.4 million), less than 20 miles from the Russian border. The third attack entered Ukraine from Russian-occupied Crimea and the Black Sea in the south, to the east of Odessa, Ukraine's third largest city (population 1 million). The fourth axis in the east pushed westward through Luhansk and attacked from Russian-dominated Donbas.

At the same time as the ground invasion, 160 Russian missiles attacked targets from air, land, and sea. Some 80 Russia bombers and fighter planes accompanied those strikes, attacking in two primary waves. Altogether in about 400 attacks in the first 24 hours, the strike force hit, according to U.S. intelligence sources and reports on the ground, 15 command control nodes and military headquarters, 18 air defense installations, 11 airfields, and six military bases.

It wasn't an overwhelming attack. But most Western analysts assumed that Russia just needed to pave the way for its ground forces to seize the capital and topple the government. And follow-on attacks would be coming, especially given that only a small fraction of Russian air and missile forces were employed in the Day One attack.

By the end of the day on Thursday, Russian ground forces moved into Ukraine, backed up by their own shorter-range artillery and missile strikes. Russian special forces and saboteurs, both in uniform and in civilian clothes, showed up in Kyiv city center. Paratroopers were airlifted ahead of the main ground force into Hostomel airfield on the northwestern edge of Kyiv's suburbs. The greatest progress was made in the northeast corner of Ukraine, on a straight line from Russian Belgorod to Kyiv. It was a second axis pointing at the capital city, the Russian force starting about 200 miles away.

But then the weaknesses of Russia conscript army, its military equipment, and its over-optimistic strategy began to show. Perhaps most significant was the battle at Hostomel, the airfield north of Kyiv, and key to Russia's effort to quickly overthrow the democratic government of Ukraine and achieve "regime change." Russian airborne troops carried by helicopters landed at the airfield in the early morning hours on Thursday to create a stepping stone into the city. But by the end of the day, Ukrainian defenders had regained control.

Meanwhile, the forward edge of the main force of Russian troops got bogged down 20 miles north of Kyiv. Heading south along the west bank of the Dnieper river, which extends from the Belarus border and splits the Ukrainian capital, tanks and armored vehicles slowed the advance. Russian logistical resupplies faltered. Ukrainian ground defenders, as well as Ukrainian fighter jets, attacked the advancing force and scored unexpected victories. Russia's land army proved not up to the task, as numerous stories of confused and unmotivated soldiers emerged. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian people's defense exceeded all expectations. Babushkas armed with broomsticks were defeating the Russian Army: that became the dominant narrative.

With the exception of long-range strikes, almost everything about the initial salvos of the Russian invasion failed. Ukrainian air defenses were not disabled. Ukrainian airfields were not put out of action. Ukrainian defenders were able to hold their ground and move largely unfettered around the country. Ukrainian reserves and civilian defenders rapidly mobilized. Russian airborne and special forces inserted deep inside Ukraine were isolated from the main Russian force on the ground, cut off from the basics, especially ammunition resupply.

Importantly, Russia was not able to integrate any of the modern instruments of warfare—electronic warfare, cyber, space—into the military attack. In Ukraine, the electricity was also still flowing, and the telecommunications infrastructure (including the internet) was in full swing.

U.S. intelligence sources pointed out to Newsweek that while the Russian ground forces have been surprisingly sluggish and uncoordinated, they were also severely constrained in their initial attack by the Kremlin's strategy and objectives. "There's only so much civil infrastructure one can destroy if the

intention is occupation of the country," says one U.S. Air Force officer who was involved in the planning for the 2003 Iraq war. Also, in arguing that Ukraine is an integral part of Russia, Moscow could not overtly and directly attack the Ukrainian people, military observers say.

Russia may have also been seeking to maintain some semblance of goodwill with the international community (and even with the Ukrainian population) in not intentionally attacking civilians or civilian objects. The Ukrainian government claimed that only 32 civilian objects were hit on the first day of attacks, almost all of them by accident. By the end of the weekend, that number was still low, and Ukrainian health officials said that some 300 civilians had died and another 1,000 were wounded. Though there have been numerous incidents where civilian objects were hit, none so far appear to be intentional; the proportion of civilian casualties and harm is on par with that of the United States in its high-intensity air wars.

A total of 150,000 Russian invaders may sound impressive, another analyst says, but that force pushed into Ukraine from about 15 different locations, dividing up the power of each individual attack. The analyst says that such a multipronged approach demonstrates another overestimation on the part of Moscow, that the country could be quickly occupied.

On Days Two and Three of the Russian invasion, the eastern attacks from Russia—where the strongest supply lines exited—continued to advance. Some 12 battalion tactical groups (about 11,000 troops) made it to Okhtyrka, about 100 miles from Kyiv. Tanks also entered the city of Kharkiv after extensive shelling, and then escalated attacks inside the city, hoping to take Ukraine's second city. The bulk of the Russian main force north of Kyiv, some 17 battalion tactical groups and supporting units (24,000 troops) operating on the west bank of the Dnieper, made limited progress. Forward elements made it into the northern suburbs by Saturday. By Monday, there was heavy fighting near the capital city center.

By the end of the first 72 hours, the bulk of Russian attacks shifted to long-range artillery and missile strikes, most from Russian and Belarussian territory, where the launchers are immune from retaliation.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense claims in three days of fighting that some 700 Russian vehicles were destroyed, disabled or had been abandoned, including 150 tanks. Some 40 Russian aircraft and helicopters were shot down (and some crashed). In one incident, a Ukrainian Su-27 "Flanker" fighter jet shot down a Russian transport plane carrying occupation troops into the country. By the end of Day Three, Russia claimed that the number of Ukrainian "aimpoints" at targets attacked had doubled to 820, including 14 airfields and 48 air defense installations. Russia also claimed that 87 Ukrainian tanks "and other targets" were destroyed on the battlefield.

In a message on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia's invasion into Kyiv had been repelled and that Moscow's plan to quickly seize the capital and install a puppet government had been thwarted. "The real fighting for Kyiv is ongoing," Zelensky said. "We will win."

While the equipment numbers can be stultifying, casualties amongst Russian and Ukrainian military units are more sobering and revealing. According to U.S. intelligence sources, about 1,000 Russian troops have been killed or severely wounded each day of fighting. Ukrainian military deaths are estimated to be the same (about 3,000 total), demonstrating the intensity of the ground fighting at the forward edge. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed on Sunday that 4,300 Russian soldiers overall had been killed, and over 200 had been taken prisoner. U.S. intelligence is beginning to observe desertions on the part of Russian soldiers and increasing reports of soldiers refusing to fight.

"In three days, Russia couldn't achieve what we did in three hours in Iraq in 2003," a senior retired Air Force officer says, somewhat hyperbolically. In three days, the officer says, the number of aimpoints Russia attacked is only one-quarter of what the U.S. hit in the opening airstrikes in Iraq (more than 3,200 aimpoints). Preliminary analysis from U.S. intelligence indicates that Russia delivered 11,000 bombs and missiles to precisely hit some 820 separate "aimpoints," or about a seven percent success rate (the U.S. equivalent in Iraq in 2003 was well over 80 percent).

"The synergy of coordinated attacks, and the effects," the senior officer says, "have not been achieved." As an example, the officer says, the point of attacking air defenses is to hit the central nodes and connections between launchers and the early warning systems, so that the whole system collapses. "The Russians seem to be focusing on piecemeal attacks because the choreography of a coordinated attack seems too complex for them to pull off."

Another retired officer jokingly dismissed the Russian effort as "shock and awful," riffing off the "shock and awe" of Iraq, an attack mainly on Baghdad that sent the Iraq regime and command structure into disarray from which they never recovered.

On Sunday, Russian President Putin ordered Russia's nuclear forces to a "special regime of combat duty," a status that Western observers have taken to mean a higher state of nuclear alert. Putin said that the shift in nuclear forces' readiness was in response to NATO's "aggressive statements" and sanctions. A more accurate interpretation is that with Moscow's military failure, the nuclear threat was necessary to forestall any possible NATO intervention.

Putin's caution about potential failure can also be seen in the surprise meeting of Ukrainian and Russia officials at the Belarussian border, and their agreement to meet again in the coming days. Military observers say that the best that Putin might be able to salvage is holding on to three wedges of Ukrainian territory, citing Kyiv, Kharkiv and north of Crimea. These wedges could serve as bargaining chips in exchange for "security guarantees" regarding Ukraine, such as a pledge not to join the Western alliance or officially becoming a "neutral" country, eschewing NATO military links.

White House sources say that President Joe Biden's State of the Union address will focus on Ukraine: Russia's unprovoked invasion and Putin's violation of international law, the valiant defense being mounted by the Ukrainian people, and the good news of alliance solidarity and tough sanctions. Russia's nuclear threat lurks behind all of this—a threat that no one in Washington conceived of, and one, according to defense experts, that has now spooked the administration.

Fear of escalation might in the short term focus Washington and NATO on crisis decision-making, and provoke a reopening of the Cold War playbook, to react.

In the longer term, the recognition of Russian military weakness represents a fundamental challenge to U.S. strategy, spending priorities and even its firm hold on the world. It questions Washington's obsession with a supposed "peer" adversary and the U.S. emphasis on a larger military and ever-increasing defense spending to deal with Russia. Changing the narrative on the Russian military also fundamentally challenges NATO and its European members. Though there might be heightened awareness and even fear of Moscow's willingness to resort to extreme and even reckless behavior, the reality is that there doesn't need to be increased defense spending or a renewal of European ground forces.

Though many will argue that the new focus needs to be the old focus—containment, economic warfare to weaken the state, and nuclear disarmament talks—the new reality from Moscow's point of view will likely solidify around their belief that their only true strength lies in Russia's nuclear forces: that they are more important than ever to preserve the State, or at least the current political system that rules the state.

For Washington, this display of Russian military weakness should be comforting in terms of Moscow's true military threat to Europe. At the same time though, it exposes the need for a different national security strategy, one that doesn't imagine Russia as a military equal, and one that doesn't push Vladimir Putin's back against a wall.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/01 Burglaries at auto dealers, repair shops
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SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3371921/auto-dealers-burglaries-western-washington/">https://mynorthwest.com/3371921/auto-dealers-burglaries-western-washington/</a>
GIST	<p>Be careful next time you take your car in for an oil change and drop it off the night before. Auto dealers and repair shops are increasingly becoming a target of burglars around the Puget Sound region.</p> <p>From Bellevue to Olympia, burglars are reportedly breaking into dealerships and mechanics' shops, often by ramming their cars into service entrances.</p> <p>Often, the object of the burglary appears to be the keys to the cars on site — either the dealership's own cars or the keys that people drop off when having their cars worked on. The criminals either steal the cars at the time of the burglary, or return later for them.</p> <p>This happened early Friday morning at Nissan of Olympia, when burglars rammed a car into the service entrance to get in. John Brown, the dealership's general manager, said that the burglars took the keys to two cars that were waiting for service.</p> <p>"They did take a customer's car, so what they're really doing is looking at the service drive to see if there's any night drop, because customers will drop cars off at night," Brown said. "They got [two cars], but we've recovered one of the cars already — we've got one car that we're still looking for."</p> <p>The <a href="#">Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force</a>, made up of police from different agencies, is putting a special emphasis toward catching the burglars. The task force is recommending that auto dealers and repair shops put any keys dropped off after hours in a safe or similar secure storage system, so they could not be easily accessed by any trespassers. The task force also suggests upgrading video systems and keeping parking lots well-lit.</p> <p>Brown said that his dealership already has a secure key drop, but he and his colleagues plan to further fortify the building by reinforcing the large glass windows and blocking entrances with cars.</p> <p>"If you think you're secure, you're not secure. They're always going to try to find a way, they're always trying to find new ways, right?" Brown said. "So we're blocking every entrance possible with our own cars. I mean, every car dealership has enough cars to block."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 DEA: 4-in-10 fake pills w/fatal dose fentanyl</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/dea-4-in-10-counterfeit-pills-contain-fatal-dose-of-fentanyl/">https://www.q13fox.com/news/dea-4-in-10-counterfeit-pills-contain-fatal-dose-of-fentanyl/</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) warns that 4 in 10 counterfeit pills circulating in the U.S. contain a fatal dose of fentanyl.</p> <p>The U.S. is grappling with a fentanyl crisis, <a href="#">one which has become markedly worse in Western Washington</a>.</p> <p>Officials warn that drug networks are mass-producing fake opioid prescription pills, designed to look like oxycodones, hydrocodones, alprazolams and amphetamines.</p> <p>These pills are practically identical to real prescription pills, but are cut with fentanyl or methamphetamine.</p> <p>Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that can be deadly even in very small amounts, and other drugs, including heroin, meth and marijuana, can be laced with the dangerous drug. Mexico and China are the primary sources for the flow of fentanyl into the United States, <a href="#">according to the DEA</a>.</p> <p>An agency lab studied an assortment of counterfeit pills, and concluded that 4 in 10 of them contain a lethal dose of fentanyl. The DEA has been following the spread of the deadly drug, and in September <a href="#">issued a national alert</a> for an "alarming increase" in the availability of these pills. Officials say they are easily sold on e-commerce sites, and often target minors.</p>

	In 2021, federal agents seized more than 20 million fake, fentanyl-laced pills—more than in 2019 and 2020 combined. That same year, fentanyl overdoses became the number-one cause of death among U.S. adults ages 18–45.
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Renton family ambushed, held at gunpoint</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/like-a-nightmare-renton-family-ambushed-held-at-gunpoint-in-front-of-kids">https://komonews.com/news/local/like-a-nightmare-renton-family-ambushed-held-at-gunpoint-in-front-of-kids</a>
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — A Renton family endured 20 minutes of terror, after police said robbers held them at gunpoint in front of their young children.</p> <p>Police say they watched as robbers ransacked their home in the middle of the night in a cul-de-sac along SE 184th.</p> <p>Renton police said around 1:30 a.m. Sunday the family had arrived from their in-laws house, and pulled into their garage.</p> <p>As they took out their 3-year-old and 6-year-old kids from the car, police said three men with guns drawn ambushed the family and forced them into their home.</p> <p>Investigators said the robbers demanded the family to stay in the living room with their heads down, while they ransacked the house.</p> <p>The family told KOMO News the suspects stole money, jewelry, designer bags and even the kids’ piggy banks.</p> <p>News of the home invasion shook the quiet community.</p> <p>“I’m in total shock,” said neighbor Larysa Stavkovy. “It’s totally surreal, like a nightmare to me.”</p> <p>“I am actually pretty scared because this neighborhood seems pretty safe,” said Vince Duong.</p> <p>Investigators said the robbers took off on foot and it’s likely they had a getaway car nearby.</p> <p>“This community felt very safe but as someone told me it takes one bad person to come in and all of a sudden it’s not safe anymore,” Stavkovy said.</p> <p>While violent crime continues to climb around King County, the neighborhood is staying vigilant.</p> <p>“Something needs to be changed or improved,” Duong said.</p> <p>Police said the suspects were described as approximately 5’10” in height; one of them was wearing a “Thrasher” t-shirt.</p> <p>Renton detectives are requesting that neighbors near the robbery to check their exterior surveillance camera footage between the hours of 12:30 a.m. and 1:30 a.m. on 02-27 for any vehicles or subjects who may have been nearby.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Police tackle catalytic converter thefts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/law-enforcement-task-force-combat-catalytic-converter-thefts/281-9728ece3-28ec-4352-ba99-dfecf90247d5">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/law-enforcement-task-force-combat-catalytic-converter-thefts/281-9728ece3-28ec-4352-ba99-dfecf90247d5</a>
GIST	BELLEVUE, Wash. — It's an issue that is impacting people across Washington and doesn't discriminate when it comes to where you live or what kind of car you drive.

	<p>Catalytic converter thefts can be completed in less than 2 minutes and prove incredibly costly.</p> <p>"It is clear this problem is not going away and is not slowing down," said Bellevue Police Chief Wendell Shirley.</p> <p>In Bellevue alone, the city has seen a nearly 600% increase in catalytic converter thefts in one year.</p> <p>In Kirkland, that number is nearly 300%.</p> <p>King County has seen the number of cases jump from fewer than 20 a year to four every single day.</p> <p>Chief Shirley said the situation is growing much more serious.</p> <p>"Catalytic converter thefts are not only an expensive crime for victims, but it's dangerous as we're finding thieves now arming themselves with weapons," she said.</p> <p>In February, a man was standing near his car near T-Mobile Park when he saw a black van pull up, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>The victim reportedly saw a woman carrying a cutting tool get out of the van and kneel under his car.</p> <p>When he confronted the woman and the person with her, they shot at him, but he was uninjured.</p> <p>Now nine law enforcement agencies are forming a task force to share leads, pool resources, and crack down on those stealing the units and the recyclers buying them.</p> <p>Someone stealing a catalytic converter can earn a few hundred dollars for its precious metals, but cost the victim is five times that or more.</p> <p>"Catalytic converter thieves directly impact an individual or family's ability to move around the community for work, school or basic needs," said King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall. "For lower-income households this can be particularly devastating, cutting off income due to lack of transportation."</p> <p>Two bills are currently working their way through Olympia that would require recyclers to keep strict records showing proof the device isn't stolen, impose heavier fines and create a statewide task force.</p> <p>All proposals Bothell Police Chief Ken Seuberlich said would be very welcome.</p> <p>"Whether it's increasing funding for specialty units, assisting with prosecution, any of those things that bring community, law enforcement, the prosecutors office together, that's the team effort we need."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 King Co. juvenile restorative justice plan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/king-county-to-continue-new-juvenile-restorative-justice-program-despite-pushback/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/king-county-to-continue-new-juvenile-restorative-justice-program-despite-pushback/</a>
GIST	<p>King County will keep moving forward with a new juvenile restorative justice program, passed in the wake of 2020's mass racial justice protests, despite the protests of four suburban mayors who worry it is too lenient on some youth offenders.</p> <p>The Metropolitan King County Council unanimously approved the Restorative Community Pathways program in November 2020, as a small part of its massive two-year budget package.</p> <p>The \$6.2 million program, which only went into effect last November, allows the county prosecutor, rather than filing criminal charges, to refer certain offenders to one of eight community groups who then lead the youth and those they've harmed through a restorative justice process.</p>



A guide from the community group will seek to address what led to the offense — mental health problems, unstable housing, substance abuse — while seeking to connect offenders with available services.

The program allows for up to 600 referrals a year for juvenile misdemeanors and first-time felonies, and it is up to the prosecutor's discretion which cases get referred to the program and which are filed in the traditional legal system.

In December, just six weeks after the program went into effect, the mayors of Auburn, Federal Way, Kent and Renton issued a joint statement outlining concerns and asking for the program to be paused.

"We are alarmed to learn that felonies such as bringing a gun or other weapon to school or a physical assault will not result in an arrest, at a time when we are seeing rising violence and mental health crises in schools," wrote Mayors Nancy Backus, Jim Ferrell, Dana Ralph and Armondo Pavone.

In a committee meeting of the County Council on Tuesday, King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg forcefully pushed back, defending the program as offering more support and better outcomes than putting kids through the legal system.

The County Council's Law and Justice Committee voted 5-1 Tuesday against pausing the diversion program and against pushing the prosecutor's office to limit the offenses eligible for referral.

In the first four months of the program, the prosecutor's office has referred 166 cases for diversion, ranging from a child aged 11 to three 20-year-olds, with the vast majority under age 18, according to an interim report.

The program was originally aimed for juveniles age 17 and younger, and more than 90% of participants, so far, have been juveniles. But, the prosecutor's office said, the number of juvenile offenders plummeted during the pandemic, so the program was opened up to some low-level offenders between ages 18 and 20.

By far the most common offense is fourth-degree assault, a gross misdemeanor punishable, for adults, by no more than one year in jail. Most of those have been for fights at school, the prosecutor's office said. There have been just two referrals to the program for possession of a firearm.

By referring such cases to the community groups, Satterberg said, that young person is going to be surrounded by people "who ask them to talk about why they are carrying a gun" and will be in consistent contact with them for months. If, instead, he files criminal charges, Satterberg said, there will be a trial in six to eight months and "and in the meantime nothing is going to happen with that youth ... there's no other support."

"Then they'll get convicted and have a felony on their record," Satterberg said. "It's my decision as the prosecutor and if you don't like it, well, sorry but I get to make that call using my prosecutorial discretion."

Councilmember Reagan Dunn pushed for [the diversion program to be paused](#) and for the prosecutor's office to limit the offenses eligible for referral.

"Nobody thinks diversion is wrong, diversion's a really important part of the criminal justice system," Dunn said. But Dunn said that "more serious felonies" should go before a judge, not the restorative justice program. He said the program has a "perception problem" as [violent crime has surged](#) the last several years.

"It's not all rainbows and unicorns here and I feel like you're representing that," he said.

Jimmy Hung, the chief juvenile prosecutor in Satterberg's office, cited an example of a group of kids who push another kid to the ground and steal his backpack. That, Hung said, is felony robbery in the second

degree, a case they used to file all the time, despite [plenty of research](#) showing [worsening outcomes](#) for kids after they enter the legal system.

Would anyone have a problem with that case being diverted, Hung asked?

“I do think there’s this perception that the [Restorative Community Pathways] response is somehow a lesser response,” Hung said. “It’s a better response than what we can accomplish in the courtroom, it’s a more effective response, it holds young people more accountable.”

And while crime has surged, Hung said, juvenile offenses have not.

“We have to hear concerns and we have to address concerns and we should do that,” Councilmember Claudia Balducci said. “But if the question is should we move forward, absolutely move forward.”

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Woman set SPD cars on fire: 5yrs in jail</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Woman-gets-5-year-term-for-police-car-fires-in-16969624.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Woman-gets-5-year-term-for-police-car-fires-in-16969624.php</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A woman who torched five Seattle police cars during a tumultuous protest that heralded a summer of unrest after George Floyd's murder in 2020 was sentenced Tuesday to five years in prison.</p> <p>Margaret Channon, 26, of Tacoma, used an aerosol can and a lighter as a makeshift flame-thrower to burn the unoccupied, parked police vehicles in downtown Seattle on May 30, soon after officers sprayed tear gas to disperse a massive crowd. For 25 minutes she ran back and forth between the cars, adding fire as necessary to destroy them.</p> <p>The burning police cars became some of the most indelible images of Seattle's unrest — overshadowing the thousands who demonstrated for racial justice with justifiable anger, but who were nevertheless peaceful, Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Greenberg told U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour.</p> <p>“She wasn't alone, but Ms. Channon set the tone for what that protest became moving forward,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Greenberg said. “Ms. Channon left downtown Seattle in flames and in billowing smoke.”</p> <p>Millions across the country took to the streets after cellphone video surfaced of white Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressing his knee against the neck of Floyd, who was Black, for 9 1/2 minutes as Floyd pleaded for breath. Chauvin was convicted last year on state charges of murder and manslaughter and was sentenced to 22 1/2 years in prison; he and three other officers have been convicted of federal civil rights violations.</p> <p>In cities across the United States, protesters fed up with seeing Black people killed by police faced off against heavily-armed officers, with some smashing cruisers, ransacking businesses and setting fires. In Seattle, demonstrators went on to seize an area of several city blocks in the Capitol Hill neighborhood — the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest — and police for a time abandoned the nearby East Precinct building.</p> <p>Channon, who also acknowledged smashing a store window and busting the cash register at a sandwich shop, was the fifth and final defendant sentenced in federal court for actions related to the civil unrest in Seattle.</p> <p>Kelly Jackson received more than three years for throwing Molotov cocktails at two Seattle police vehicles on May 30. Tyre Means got five years for burning one Seattle police vehicle and stealing a firearm out of another that day. Desmond David-Pitts and Isaiah Willoughby received 20 and 24 months, respectively, for setting fires at the East Precinct.</p>

Channon apologized in a letter to the court and through a sentencing memo filed by her lawyer, acknowledging that the Black Lives Matter movement does not condone illegal acts and that as a white woman it was not her place to coopt the cause.

“I apologize to the many workers and activists — who have given decades of their lives to building a countermeasure to police violence — that did not want to see fire,” Channon wrote. “I had intended to effect positive change, but my attempt was misguided.”

Her mother, Elizabeth MacGahan, wrote her own letter to the court, saying Channon grew up in a family with a long history of civil service and citing the destabilizing effects of the pandemic, the protests and the recent deaths of her two beloved grandmothers as possible factors in her actions.

“It’s a very difficult time to be young and sensitive, and to suffer losses,” she said.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said it offered Channon a chance to plead guilty to conspiracy, rather than arson — which would have enabled her to argue for a sentence less than the five-year mandatory minimum for arson.

Channon refused. Her attorney, Vanessa Pai-Thompson, wrote that “Channon was adamant that she would not do anything to shift blame to others for decisions that were hers alone.”

After the sentencing, Seattle U.S. Attorney Nick Brown — the first Black person to serve as the Justice Department's top prosecutor in western Washington — said he understood and shared the anger over Floyd's murder.

“I watched people gather and protest here in Seattle with a lot of admiration,” Brown said. “To see that devolve into bombing of police vehicles and destruction of businesses ... was profoundly sad for me.”

His nearly 80-year-old father, Hank, was jailed during civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s, and Brown said he appreciated that protests sometimes must be loud, angry and disruptive — but not destructive. Channon's actions undercut the message of the Black Lives Matter movement, he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Pierce Co. homicides at a troubling rate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article258898838.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article258898838.html</a>
GIST	<p>Two months into the year, homicides in Pierce County are double what they were during the same time period last year.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials say that’s concerning since the homicide rate in 2020 and 2021 was already higher than usual.</p> <p>As of Monday, there have been 21 homicides in the county this year. Four of those were fatal police shootings.</p> <p>On the same date last year, there had been 11 homicides countywide. That was nearly double from the six homicides that occurred in January and February 2020.</p> <p>“We had a lot of changes made in the last two years, and any of them could have drastically impacted crime rates,” said Pierce County sheriff’s Sgt. Darren Moss. “Having them all combined means we’re seeing a lot of bad stuff.”</p> <p>He pointed to the COVID-19 pandemic, restricted booking at the jail, new laws surrounding policing, decriminalization of drug possession and lack of confidence in law enforcement that led to nationwide protests after George Floyd’s murder as reasons for the spike in crime.</p>

The Sheriff's Department has had eight homicides in their jurisdictions this year. Tacoma police have nine. Puyallup, Lakewood, Fife and Buckley have each had one. All but one homicide, or 95 percent so far, involved a gun. The other involved somebody deliberately running over a 68-year-old man at a Spanaway drive-thru restaurant last weekend.

Seven of the 21 homicides are unsolved.

"The increase in homicides cannot be directly attributed to any one thing," Tacoma police spokeswoman Wendy Haddow said. "The Tacoma Police Department historically has a very high solve rate for homicides and continues to do so. This is due to the diligent work of our detectives and officers and their partnerships within the community and the media."

Tacoma is still investigating two of this year's homicide, giving it a 78 percent solve rate so far.

The first homicide this year was 40-year-old Sorin Lay, who was fatally shot Jan. 1 by a friend in Parkland as they allegedly sat in a car smoking heroin and methamphetamine. The friend was later arrested and charged with first-degree murder and first-degree assault.

There have been three domestic-violence killings, two of which ended with the suspects killing themselves. Gloria Choi was fatally shot Jan. 2 in Lakewood by an ex-boyfriend from whom she'd repeatedly sought protection. A Carbonado man killed his girlfriend and then shot himself Jan. 9 after a police pursuit. Tacoma police said a 31-year-old woman was fatally shot Monday by her boyfriend in a motel parking lot during a disagreement. That victim has not been publicly identified.

Motives in the other homicides are still being investigated. At least one stemmed from a road-rage incident. Others are believed to have involved drugs.

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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 Carjacking on rise among teens; why?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/car-theft-teens-pandemic.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/car-theft-teens-pandemic.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The quiet alley behind his mother's house was where Tariq Majeed, a 45-year-old father of three, often came for some uninterrupted work. He ran a car-detailing business, and around midday on a chilly Tuesday in late January he was deep-cleaning the back seats of a client's BMW. He felt a nudge from behind and turned to find it was a gun.</p> <p>The gunman — who was masked and, Mr. Majeed estimated, could not have been older than a teenager — demanded the keys. When Mr. Majeed fumbled to get them out of his work apron, the young man slammed the gun into the bridge of his nose. Mr. Majeed doubled over, the keys fell out of the apron, and seconds later the car was gone.</p> <p>The police quickly found the BMW, which had been shut off remotely by an anti-theft system and left behind. They told Mr. Majeed that earlier that morning there had been another carjacking, of a Dodge Durango at a Shell station up the road. The Dodge, too, had been abandoned — not far from where Mr. Majeed was working. No one has been caught.</p> <p>"I honestly believe it's a game," Mr. Majeed said. Stolen cars used to be stripped down, with the parts sold for cash, he said. Now people are carjacked, and the cars are often found afterward, crashed or just left on the street. "It's a game."</p> <p>In the strange math of the past two pandemic years, as different kinds of crime have spiked and plummeted, carjacking has made an alarming resurgence. The number of reported incidents nearly quadrupled in Philadelphia from 2019 to 2021 and <a href="#">is on track to double this year</a>; Chicago had more than 1,900 carjackings last year, the highest number in decades. Two months into 2022 the number of armed carjackings in New Orleans was already at two-thirds the whole year's tally in 2019. Washington, D.C., where 426 carjackings were reported last year, is not an exception.</p>

There are reasons carjacking may have begun proliferating even [as robbery rates](#) dropped in 2020: Push-button ignitions have made it harder to operate cars without getting the keys from the driver; supply chain problems boosted the price of used cars as millions found themselves in economic straits; and the pandemic ushered in an army of delivery workers, often stopping in unfamiliar neighborhoods. Ride-share drivers, the police said, have been summoned, then robbed on arrival.

But none of this fully explains what officials say is the most troubling part of the trend: the ages of so many who have been arrested. [Fourteen-year-olds](#), [12-year-olds](#), even [11-year-olds](#) have been charged with armed carjacking or in some cases murder.

“They are children,” Robert J. Contee III, chief of Washington’s Metropolitan Police Department, said at a news conference in early February about a carjacking task force formed with the police in a neighboring county. “The fact that between Prince George’s County and D.C. we have over 200 young people that committed a carjacking is staggering to me.”

Carjacking is a hard crime to analyze. In statistics, it is often mixed in with other auto theft and robbery crimes. Arrest rates are low — fewer than one in eight carjackings in Chicago resulted in arrest in 2020, [according to a study by the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab](#) — making conclusions hard to draw. Young people are more likely to be caught, criminal justice experts say, and thus show up disproportionately in arrest numbers.

Still, something appears to be happening. Karl A. Racine, the attorney general of the District of Columbia, reported that from 2020 to 2021 his office saw a 60 percent drop in the number of juvenile cases in virtually every category of violent crime. Carjacking cases, however, nearly tripled.

More than half of those arrested on carjacking charges in Washington in the past year were under 18, including two girls in their early teens who pleaded guilty to charges of murdering a 66-year-old delivery driver; a pair of 15-year-olds charged last month with taking more than a dozen cars at gunpoint; and a 14-year-old girl arrested last weekend who was accused of taking part in four carjackings, three of them armed.

The mayor and the police chief say that there is too little accountability and that young people who are arrested on carjacking charges are often right back out in the community. Of the 151 carjacking arrests in 2021, police officials said, 85 involved juveniles with prior criminal records.

Mr. Racine has pushed back, explaining at a recent public hearing that a vast majority of teenagers charged with carjacking in the past year had no carjacking arrests on their records. There should be a focus on preventing recidivism, he said, but the problems driving this run deeper.

“You can do all you want and even lock up everyone who commits a crime,” Mr. Racine said. “I’m here to tell you there is a long line of tomorrow’s crime that’s coming up, because of the reasons below the iceberg.”

The University of Chicago study looked specifically at young people arrested on carjacking charges in 2020. It found that they were more likely than in past years to have no prior record and “more likely to live in areas with lower internet access and school attendance, especially during the pandemic.”

In the poorer neighborhoods of Washington, these findings are no surprise.

City schools have [struggled for years with chronic absenteeism](#), and neighborhood groups have long [sought more after-school options](#). But when the pandemic hit, nearly all activities outside the home went away. Many young people found themselves confined in tight quarters with family members reeling from [job losses](#), [sickness and death](#).

Tariq Majeed’s brother Warees Majeed, a founder of [a group that works with troubled youth in Washington](#), said those conditions changed how young people saw the world around them.

He said the pandemic “had people more confined into a space where they were also able to see a little bit more the disparity,” adding, “You’re sitting there all day looking around and you start to think, ‘This isn’t the life I want to live.’”

At E.L. Haynes Public Charter School, a high school in Washington where most students are from low-income households, teenagers described the pandemic years as both terrifying and dull. “Like the world is about to end,” as one 15-year-old boy put it, “like you got nothing to lose.” The closure of recreation centers and schools in 2020 left young people with few places to relieve stress, take the usual teenage risks or make a name for themselves.

“We just plain lost some kids,” said Kimberly Perry, the executive director of DC Action for Children, a nonprofit.

Where young people found one another was on social media. YouTube, TikTok and Instagram started serving the purposes once provided by homerooms, gyms and recreation centers — places where they could hang out and show off. And there were no teachers, coaches or other adults.

“The internet just took over,” one 16-year-old boy at E.L. Haynes said. “Everybody tried to go viral, doing stupid stuff.”

The boy, who like other classmates did not want to be named, said that in the early days of the pandemic, he had heard that guys on the street were stealing cars to bring in some money. Then young people started doing it, he said, at first jumping into cars that were left idling and unattended and just driving around. Videos of these rides around the city started showing up on social media.

Before long, “carjacking became a sport,” said one community organizer. “A big bandwagon,” said another.

“A thrill, almost like a fad,” Warees Majeed said. “When you don’t have activities in their communities, everything’s shut down, young people are going to find a way to entertain themselves. It’s recreation, that’s what it is.”

The notion that crimes go in and out of fashion is not new. In the early 2000s, some young people in Washington began stealing cars, calling themselves “U.U. Boys” after the criminal charge of “unauthorized use of a vehicle.” Then, auto thefts began dropping precipitously, said Eduardo Ferrer, the policy director of the Georgetown Juvenile Justice Initiative, and cellphone snatching began to proliferate.

“It has been interesting over the course of my career to watch the mix of crime shift without seeming explanation,” Professor Ferrer said. “A number of these are crimes of opportunity, folks looking for that kind of low-hanging fruit.”

What is clear, he said, is that the long-term impact of the solitary and traumatic pandemic years on the development of adolescents cannot be overstated. Though schools are back to in-person learning and recreation centers are reopening, that impact — and the rise in carjackings — has not simply gone away.

“I don’t think people are prepared for how much we are going to have to dig out and heal from the pandemic,” Professor Ferrer said.

In January, Nate Fleming, a candidate for the District of Columbia Council, was at a gas station when a masked gunman stepped out of a burgundy S.U.V. and demanded his car keys.

During an interview at a downtown cafe, Mr. Fleming explained how young people who are disengaged can get involved in such a dangerous activity. He recalled his time coaching football at a city middle school, and how the students who did not make the team were far more likely to get into serious trouble.



	<p>“Youth are in crisis,” Mr. Fleming said.</p> <p>Four days after his carjacking, the same burgundy S.U.V. was seen at two separate shootings, one of them fatal, the police said. A week and a half after that, a 17-year-old was arrested and charged with the armed robbery of Mr. Fleming.</p> <p>But first, the teen “went on social media and took videos of driving around in my car,” Mr. Fleming said. “So I mean, we’re in a warped world.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/02 ‘Court debt’ steep barrier to second chance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/court-debt-barrier-to-record-clearing-49-states/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/court-debt-barrier-to-record-clearing-49-states/</a>
GIST	<p>Court fees and fines that individuals who are convicted of crimes cannot afford to pay are too often all that stand in the way of a second chance at jobs and productive, independent lives for low-income adults with criminal records.</p> <p>But state laws make it nearly impossible for low-income <a href="#">individuals with criminal records</a> to achieve the clean slate that is a practical necessity for successfully starting over, according to a <a href="#">new report</a> titled "The High Cost of a Fresh Start," from the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) and the Collateral Consequences Resource Center (CCRC).</p> <p>In other words, unpaid court debt — including outstanding booking fees, drug-testing fees, representation by a public defender, prison room and board, and other costs — makes it hard, if not impossible, for people to clear their criminal records and access employment, secure a place to live and support themselves and their families. Late fees and interest charges often only pile up to compound the problem.</p> <p>As a result, ex-convicts with outstanding debt can get caught in a vicious cycle: Unable to pay off their so-called "court debt," they can't get their records cleared, which makes employment opportunities scarce, preventing them from earning enough money to pay the thousands of dollars in fees and fines levied on them.</p> <p><b>"Priced out of a fresh start" in 49 states</b></p> <p>Between 70 million and 100 million Americans — or as many as one in three of us — have some type of criminal record, according to the Sentencing Project, a group that advocates for a fair and effective criminal justice system in the U.S.</p> <p>Yet of all 50 U.S. states, plus the District of Columbia and the federal system, only Louisiana overlooks court debt in deciding whether a person is eligible to have their record cleared, or expunged, the report's authors found.</p> <p>"We found in almost every jurisdiction that outstanding court debt bars record-clearing in at least some cases," said National Consumer Law Center attorney Ariel Nelson, an author of the report.</p> <p>The burden falls heavily on members of Black and Brown communities, who are disproportionately low-income and who are more likely to have criminal records.</p> <p>"Criminal record clearing must not be reserved only for those who can easily pay for it," Margaret Love, executive director of CCRC, said in a statement. "States should ensure people are not being priced out of a chance at a fresh start."</p> <p>Six U.S. states require that all court debt be paid off for an individual to qualify for record-clearing. In these states, court debt is an absolute bar to a clean slate and second shot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arkansas</li> <li>• Indiana</li> <li>• Iowa</li> <li>• Missouri</li> </ul>



- New Mexico
- Texas

In another seven states, only debt that is part of an individual's sentence must be paid off for them to qualify for record-clearing. The following states do not necessarily require that all fees be satisfied first:

- Arizona
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Tennessee
- Utah

In fifteen states, former convicts must pay off certain types of debt, like restitution or court debt associated with felonies, but not misdemeanors, before they're considered for record clearing. Mississippi, for example, requires payment of court debt to clear felonies but not misdemeanors. The following states vary in terms of what type of court debt must first be satisfied:

- Alabama
- Colorado
- Delaware
- Georgia
- Mississippi
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- New Jersey
- Oklahoma
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Vermont
- Washington
- Wyoming

Fourteen states and Washington, D.C., do not require outright that court debt be settled in order to qualify for record-clearing, but it may be considered as part of one's application. Seven states and the federal system have no general record-clearing law, the report found.

### **"Poverty penalties"**

A criminal record can often become a life sentence to poverty, according to the report's findings.

"We know that people with court debt aren't paying it because they can't. The vast majority aren't trying to avoid obligation, they just can't afford to pay it off," Nelson said.

Court debt can accumulate, too, when it's not paid right away. In general, late fees, payment plan fees and interest are tacked on to a base amount that swells the longer the debt goes unpaid.

"We call these 'poverty penalties,' because if you can't pay right away, it's going to cost you more," Nelson said.

The group recommends that court debt be eliminated across the board as a prerequisite for record-clearing. "Qualification for it should not be conditioned on payment," Nelson said.

The fact that court debt is a barrier to an individual's eligibility for a clean slate also deters convicts from even applying to have their records cleared in the first place, as it's seen as too risky a gamble.

	<p>"They might not even seek relief because they know they can't afford the application fee, and if the court is going to consider their outstanding debt, it might not be worth it for them to expend all this money for nothing," Nelson said.</p> <p><b>Best path to second chance</b></p> <p>Nelson objects to these kinds of fees existing at all, calling them a "revenue generator for the court system."</p> <p>"If a state's goal is to get money back, this isn't helping, it's hurting. This is not helping anyone," Nelson said.</p> <p>Record-clearing is known as one of the best paths to a second chance at laying a new foundation for a career, but it's not effective if it's inaccessible to those who need it most.</p> <p>"It's so devastating because court debt could be the only thing standing between someone and the ability to get a second chance and access a better job or better housing, because criminal records can completely bar people from certain jobs or housing opportunities," Nelson said.</p> <p>That said, states are considering remodeling their laws to make record-clearing more accessible — regardless of whether or not one's debt has been satisfied.</p> <p>"Our report makes the landscape look bleak," Nelson said. "But lots of states are taking steps to making record-clearing available to those even with outstanding court debt."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>03/01 New Zealand police \$166M meth bust</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zealand-police-make-huge-meth-bust-airport-arrest-83199078">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zealand-police-make-huge-meth-bust-airport-arrest-83199078</a>
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand -- New Zealand police said Wednesday they had seized more than half a ton of methamphetamine at the border and arrested six people in one of the nation's biggest drug busts.</p> <p>Police said they intercepted the shipment of 613 kilograms (1,351 pounds) of meth at Auckland Airport on Thursday and began making arrests late Tuesday.</p> <p>Those arrested are all from Auckland and aged between 27 and 36. They face charges of importing and supplying meth, as well as money laundering.</p> <p>Police said some of those arrested have links to an Australia-based gang, the Comanchero Motorcycle Club. They said the drugs had a street value of 245 million New Zealand dollars (\$166 million).</p> <p>Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said the drugs could have caused immense harm to the vulnerable communities the criminals were targeting.</p> <p>Police said their <a href="#">investigation</a> was continuing and that they might make more arrests. They didn't immediately say where the drugs had been shipped from.</p>
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